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REPORT FROM GERMANY

by

LEONARD O. MOSLEY

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CHAPTER ONE

WHEN I CROSSED the German frontier one afternoon in early April, 1945, I was setting out on the first part of a tour of Germany that was to last until after the capitulation; but it was no "first visit" to the Reich for me. As a war correspondent attached to the Allied armies since D-Day, I had of course been several times into German territory: across the dreary marshes from Sittard to watch the Second Army's battle for Geilenkirchen; over the frontier into the Reichswald on a patrol with the Guards Armoured Division in autumn 1944; and farther south with the American armies into Aachen; and later into the Rhineland. But those were visits so much more connected with military operations than with Germany herself that they hardly count. This is a book about civilians—Germans—and civilian populations, under the constant terror of close-range shells and bullets and bombs, are apt to act subhumanly. No, when I thought about the "last time" I had been inside Germany, as I crossed the border that afternoon, my mind was really going back to 1939.

From 1937 until the outbreak of war I was one of that small band of frustrated, unlistened-to writers who were the Berlin correspondents of Britain's daily newspapers. For three years I made Germany my base as I travelled Central Europe and waited for the War to come. There had been visits to Spain, Austria, Poland, Danzig and Italy, to Hungary, Rumania and Czechoslovakia, but all of them in those years were so closely connected with the plans and ambitions of Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party that it was as if I never left Germany. The menace of Germany was everywhere, the breath of the Nazis always on your neck. Through all my dispatches, like those of my colleagues, ran the warning theme of Germany's massing armaments, Germany's

growing determination to go to war, and between the lines of every sentence we wrote was a plea to the democratic nations of the world to show determination and opposition which, even that late, might prove effective and quench Hitler's aspirations for world-domination. We were frustrated correspondents because few people listened to us, and because, in moments of crisis, our stories were suppressed ; it was no use warning people of war and inevitable war when your stories were thrown into the waste-basket each time you gave chapter and verse.

Those were three years of crises ; old history now, and I am not going to look under the stones again : except to say, for the purposes of the record, that even in those years my theme was that there were still good, sincere and honourable Germans, and that even when war was almost upon us I still wrote, in my last dispatch from German soil, a plea that no matter what happened in the days to come we should not forget that there were men and women inside Germany who believed, as some of us did, in justice and peace and beauty, and that when the horrors of the War were over they would still be there ready to help us in the building of a new world.

Those three years in Germany made me many friends. You can live that long inside a country and learn to hate a regime, but unless you are insensitive you cannot hate a whole people ; and I, far from hating the Germans, learned to love many of them. As a nation I often found them stupid and ingenuous ; it infuriated me the way in which they believed all that they were told by their leaders and their Party Press (yes, even though they had no means of learning the truth from the outside world) ; it made me writhe with anger when I saw them being worked up by Hitler or Goebbels or Goering. Yet as I travelled the country even in those ebbing days of peace it was impossible to ignore the kindness of so many of them ; and, even among those who were

members of the Party, impossible to conceal from oneself the realisation, no matter how bitter one's feelings against the regime, that here was a people who could do so much, could help so much, if only they were shown the way.

That last summer of 1939, as the clouds of war rolled over the European sky, I went to the Bayreuth Festival. Bayreuth had bitter memories for me. The year before it had been my base of operations during the political swindling that led to the Munich Pact and the cession of the Sudetenland to the Reich. I had come to Bayreuth from Chamberlain's conference at Berchtesgaden with the Fuehrer, and there I had unearthed Konrad Henlein and got him drunk enough to reveal the plan of campaign that was to lead up to Munich. From Bayreuth I had motored almost every day across the frontier into the Sudetenland itself, to watch Czechs being beaten and killed and humiliated by the S.S. and the Sudeten Freikorps, while the sleek young men of the Runciman Mission, appointed by Britain's National Government to see "fair play", motored by and pretended not to see.

No, there were no pleasant memories in Bayreuth for me. And yet when the orchestra played and the curtain rose, I forgot that Wagner had been taken over by the Nazis and that this had become almost a political festival; I could feel the Germans responding to the music with a rapture of which only they are capable, and I remember writing a dispatch, in which I said: "If only the influences of this music were at work here in Germany today, instead of the politics of the men who are sponsoring it, there would not only be no immediate threat of war but there would be hope for peace in the future. The German people are so obviously like all other peoples: they have inside them the same distillations of goodness and badness; they respond, perhaps even more than most, to emotional influence. It is the tragedy of history that at this grave moment the

influence of Adolf Hitler and his Party is stronger and more effective than that of Richard Wagner." Naïve words, maybe, but they were written under the shadow of a catastrophe which I had seen shaping there in Germany for so long; a catastrophe which I knew even then might have been avoided if only men had acted sincerely and with goodwill in their attempts to prevent it.

I was still smarting at that time from the criticisms that had been levelled against me for my opposition to Munich. I had fought against the betrayal at Munich both in my newspaper despatches and in my books; and I had been pooh-poohed by the cynics at home. They agreed with me that Munich, perhaps, had been rather rough on the Czechs. Sad, they said, but it couldn't be helped; it was necessary to "give us time". They slapped you on the back, these men around Whitehall, and assured you that it was all going to be all right; we just needed a little time to get our Army and our Air Force and our Navy into shape. I remember feeling sceptical about it as I toured Britain in the spring of 1939, examining our rearmament programme and wondering why everyone was so secretive, why they would tell you so little about how they were doing. Munich had made war inevitable; but Munich had "given us time". Then what were the Government and the great industries doing with that time? Anything?

Then at Bayreuth, one afternoon, Doctor Otto Dietrich, the leader of the Reich Press, took me along to his suite for a drink and a discussion of a coming visit that was being paid to Germany by a British nobleman. I was giving him background information he wanted when—just like that—Hitler walked in. Dietrich when he saw him tried to bundle me from the room, but Hitler stopped him and demanded that I should come forward and be introduced. He was in a good mood; he made a couple of jokes about the English Press when he knew who I was, and then banteringly asked why

British journalists in Germany wrote so much about the threat of war. "There will be no war," he said. "Don't you agree?"

This, mark you, was the summer of 1939.

I said that there would be no war if the rights of Poland and the Free City of Danzig were not infringed.

Hitler slapped his thigh, and laughed. "Even if they are, there will be no war," he said. "There was no war over the Sudetenland, nor over Czechoslovakia. There will be no war over Danzig." When I demurred he repeated: "There was no war over Sudetenland! There will be none over Poland! The conditions are exactly the same and your actions will be the same."

It was no job of mine to do Sir Nevile Henderson's job for him, badly though Sir Nevile was doing it himself, and yet I remember trying. I remember quoting my friends in London and saying: "The conditions are different, Herr Hitler. Almost a year has passed since Munich was signed. Then Britain and France were unprepared. We had no troops, nor arms, nor planes. Now we have had almost a year to get ready. We have had a year of preparation, and this time we shall keep our pledges if Poland's rights are infringed."

He turned on me sarcastically then. I remember his pale face growing ruddy with passion, and his stubby forefinger with its bitten fingernail jabbing towards me, as he said: "A year to prepare! What foolishness is that! The position of Britain and France today is worse—far worse—than in September, 1938. There will be no war, because you are less in a position to go to war now than you were a year ago. In that year you have achieved less than nothing. You have made things worse, in fact. You have built up your Army? Your Air Force? Your Navy? For every ship you have put on the stocks I have laid one down as well. For every plane you have built I have built twenty. For every

tank you have made I have constructed a hundred, and a hundred guns to your single cannon. And for every man you have put in your Army I have conscripted a thousand, and every one of them is trained and has a gun. A year to prepare! You are worse off than you ever were! You will not go to war!"

He strode from the room then. Dietrich looked across at me with a triumphant smile on his greasy face. I remember wondering who was supplying Hitler's information about our arms programme, and how near he was to the truth.

I was thinking about all that as the car swung round the corner that April afternoon, and, just beyond the rubbled wreck that used to be Venlo, we saw the great sign planted smack on the frontier: "You are now entering enemy territory. Don't fraternise." Somehow, it was hard to think of it as enemy territory, and impossible to believe that I would, by military order, be prevented from questioning the Party men and women I used to know, renewing acquaintance with those non-Party men and women who had been my friends, mixing with these Germans to find out what had happened to them in the five years I had been away.

We were going first to Süchteln, on the edge of the Rhineland, to make contact with the headquarters of Field-Marshal Montgomery's Twenty-first Army Group, from whom we must obtain the basic necessities of life and travel now we had passed onto German soil: a car in which to move about, petrol to propel it, army rations with which to eat, and passes and permissions—those inevitable passes and permissions!—with which to travel freely from area to area. I had been living under army regulations for so long that I took these preliminaries almost for granted, accepting them along with censorship and lack of telephones-to-London and other restrictions on communication as a

normal part of war-time life. I had fought them all, at one time and another, in places as far apart as Burma, Eritrea, Italy and Algiers, but now I had become practically conditioned to the routine.

So I wanted to wander about in Germany and write about conditions, instead of reporting the day-to-day progress of the Army? But surely I knew, said the Major, that I couldn't go outside Second Army's area in Germany, into the Ruhr with the Ninth, or into Hanover with the First, or into Heidelberg with the Sixth, unless I had permission, and surely I knew I must share my transport with two other correspondents accredited to Second Army, who might or might not be interested in conditions in Germany; and the destination of the party must always be decided by majority vote? And I wanted to take Gwenda with me? But Gwenda was attached to the Canadian Army, who must provide her with transport, and get her permission to travel; and in any case didn't I know that Montgomery had issued special instructions forbidding women to cross the Rhine, in case they got themselves attacked by Werewolves? And, incidentally, didn't I know that Gwenda wasn't even supposed to be out in Süchteln itself without an armed guard to protect her honour from the Huns, and as I was a non-combatant and not supposed to carry arms—if the poor girl wanted to go to the pictures, well, the Major wouldn't mind going along with her, just to make sure she came to no harm from the enemy.

All this was said, of course, with a twinkle of the eye, but it still meant difficulties lay ahead in the way of transport. It was a simple case of two people, working in the same area, interested in the same things, who wanted to go to the same places. Too simple a problem, indeed, for the Army, and instead of going across the Rhine that night there were two or three days of delay while we indulged in that ancient army art of wangling. You can arrange anything in the

Army if you have been with it long enough, but it takes time, and while we were waiting we explored the part of Germany into which we had come.

The main headquarters of Montgomery's Army Group had been removed somewhat summarily a few days before our arrival to their new headquarters in Süchteln. Before that the generals and their staffs had been comfortably ensconced in Brussels, by that time the gayest and most luxurious city in Europe; and they were reluctant to go. Troops and officers alike had made friends in Belgium, friends who entertained them lavishly, who were always ready for a party, who had never quite lost that sparkling happiness they had shown when our troops first burst into the Belgian capital. There were concerts and cinemas and theatres, black-market restaurants and cocktail bars; conditions, for those who could afford to pay, as near to peacetime luxury as anything I had seen since I left Cairo. Men and officers alike did not want to go. What, face the rigours of Germany and non-fraternisation after Brussels and blondes so filled with the spirit of giving? They kicked and scratched not to go. Some of them (including an Air Force officer of extremely exalted rank) thought that the order was unnecessary for practical reasons, and said so, and fought to remain with their staff where they were. Nevertheless, Twenty-first Army Group Main moved its headquarters, and there were many who felt that they moved less for operational reasons than because Montgomery thought that his officers were enjoying far too many comforts and getting far too soft in the balmy, scented air of Brussels' clubs and boudoirs.

Suchteln, that lovely warm April, could hardly have been called uncomfortable, but for the bulk of Twenty-first Army Group it was a salutary change from their accustomed comforts. From private billets and requisitioned luxury flats, the junior staff and their men moved into tents which most of them hadn't seen since they left Italy. Their seniors

were given more substantial cover, not perhaps inappropriately in Süchteln's large, roomy and well-appointed lunatic asylum. Not that we had to evacuate the town's insane to make way for their successors; the Nazis before us had used the asylum as a headquarters during operations along the Maas, and had sent the bulk of the inmates to be held in schools and hospitals in and around Goch and Cleve, farther north in the Reichswald Forest. We discovered that when we overran those two towns during our advance upon the Rhine, and the problem of what to do with the unfortunate mentally sick we found was one of the first problems to confront our Military Government officials. Fortunately they were mild and most willing patients, and were clamorous only to be given some sort of work to do. The Major in command told them to go out to all houses in the area and remove from the windows the sharp slivers of glass which had been left in by bomb- and shell-explosions. The lunatics did their job most thoroughly, even breaking windows which hadn't already been touched by war and removing the slivers from them as well. Then, conscious of having worked hard and well, they most docilely collected in a local school to await their disposition, and were meanwhile visited by a war correspondent, who, not understanding a German girl attendant who explained their condition, interviewed them and wrote a long and learned article from their replies about the bemused and apathetic state of the German people.

Montgomery's headquarters at Süchteln was a British island in a part of Germany completely under the control of the Americans, and the inhabitants must have felt our advent acutely. Before our coming little more than a company of American troops had been quartered in the town, whose nondescript buildings had been only slightly scarred by shells; and they had been soldiers of General Simpson's Ninth Army. That army had the unique distinction, among

all American troops in Germany at that time, of having come direct to the battlefield from America without intermediate pauses in Britain or France. A large percentage of its members were of German or German-Jewish extraction. When they were specifically asked to state their attitude, they usually expressed resentment at the Germans for having started the War and forced them to leave their homes; but it was neither deep nor lasting, and it certainly did not seriously interfere with the large measure of fraternisation between civilians and soldiers which was going on almost openly in all the back-areas of General Simpson's Army.

There was an ordnance camp in a town near Süchteln where the American officers and their men were stationed in part of a largish housing estate; they worked in a garage across the road and lived in some fifteen houses out of the fifty-odd on the estate. From those fifteen they had of course evacuated the German householders, but they had done it with a politeness and a consideration that was going to seem extraordinary to us when we went into other parts of Germany. They had, for instance, allowed the householders plenty of time to get out, and they had allowed them to take all but the more solid fixtures in the furnishings of the houses; a few chairs and stoves remained, but the radios, carpets, cooking utensils, glasses and the contents of the wine-cellars (usually detained by military requisitioners further forward) *had been taken away by their owners.* There was no open flouting of the non-fraternisation rules laid down by General Eisenhower, except in the case of the droves of small children who were always draped over the cars, chewing gum and eating peanuts and listening to stories about America from the German-speaking soldier-mechanics; but even to casual visitors like ourselves it was obvious at once that neither officers nor men were obeying it. We noticed that as the girls from the neighbouring houses came past on their way to and from the food-stores, the soldiers

shouted times at them for meetings, and got quick nods of the head in return. A Lieutenant, listening to one of these rendezvous being arranged, broke in with: "Listen, Schultz, don't let me catch you, or else it'll cost you sixty-five dollars." Schultz grinned and flicked a glance at the girl and then back to the Lieutenant: "Only sixty-five dollars, Mr. Miller. It's cheap at the price."

The staidier member of that ordnance camp, and it seemed typical of the non-combatant groups I came in contact with throughout the Ninth Army area, were not so much concerned with girls as with getting to know a family. The Americans are inveterate visitors and none seemed more eager to "visit", not unnaturally, than the German Americans in the Ninth Army. They were, on the whole, quiet, simple, ingenuous men; few of them had ever been outside the United States, which they considered the ultimate paradise; to a bewildered, unhappy and fearful German populace they were something far different to the monsters Hitler had told them to expect, and they must have proved effective ambassadors for their country.

To come away from such a community, where soldiers had as usual adapted Army rules in the only way possible to make life tolerable—to come from there into British-controlled Süchteln was a startling experience; for in Süchteln obedience to the non-fraternisation law was rigid: it had to be. No matter how individual officers and men felt, there was no relaxation of any kind allowed here. This was a headquarters' town; at any moment Montgomery, whose stern and unbending views on non-fraternisation were only too well known, might fly in from his tactical headquarters, or some inquiring general from Supreme Headquarters might arrive and find some disobedience of the law; and so the military police were always out and on the watch; you walked the streets and developed guilty feelings if your eyes

strayed after a group of Germans ; there was a feeling of tight frustration over the little town. The Germans, their masters changed from comparatively amiable Americans to stern Britons overnight, unceremoniously bundled out of their houses at a few hours' notice to make way for our troops, with all manner of duties suddenly imposed upon them,* must have thought that their own worst fears about the rigours of Allied occupation were being justified. Life in Süchteln was suddenly grim for them ; their two cinemas were taken over as Naafi entertainment centres for our troops ; though it was light until well after nine o'clock, curfew was at six and, though the nights were clear and warm, you saw no sign of them after that time. They spent a good deal of their time at the local Roman Catholic Church, where almost continuous masses were being said ; and afterwards they walked home, eyes turning neither this way nor that, smacking their children and pushing them before them if they showed signs of speaking to the bored British soldiers lounging on the corners. You felt their resentment. But it was a resentment not—as some correspondents wrote—of a people angry that they had lost the War, but of a friendly people who felt that, without reason, they had been sent into *purdah* overnight, and snubbed and humiliated. I suppose it will be pointed out that this treatment of the Germans was their just deserts for having backed Hitler and National Socialism, that it was part of their punishment for having helped to start the War ; and all I can add is that if it was someone might at least have told the people of Süchteln about it. They would then at least have understood the motive behind the snubbing of all the approaches they made to the British soldiers when they took over this little Rhineland town. They would then at least have understood

* Kitchen help, laundresses, waitresses and labour for military headquarters are usually provided through the Burgomaster's office at the request of the military authorities.

that it was on orders from above that the British were being unpleasant to them. As it was, such was the gulf between even ordinary soldier and German civilian that a colonel in the army unit with which we were staying was approached by a number of his soldiers of Roman Catholic faith and asked if they would be charged with fraternisation if they went to High Mass in the local church; and the private who cleaned my shoes in the morning was down on a charge of fraternisation for having slapped the backside of the girl who came in to wash our dishes.

When we went to sleep at night in Süchteln those days you could still hear in the distance the bang of guns shelling the quarter of a million Nazi troops trapped inside the shrinking Ruhr "pocket" ten miles away across the Rhine. Hitler had just issued his call to the Werewolves, and military officials at Süchteln were rather uneasily wondering if half the populace was not going to go into action against them—sniping, sabotaging, delaying and interfering with our lines of communication with the forward elements of our armies on the other side of the Rhine. The air of restraint in Süchteln itself might well have given that sinister impression, but once outside the limits of Twenty-first Army Group control, anyone who mixed with the German populace lost all fear of underground activity. Six miles to the east was the city of Krefeld, and ten miles away the great industrial centre of München Gladbach; badly battered by bombs and shells, wrecked in fact far more than any city in Great Britain, and the hive, one might have thought, of malcontents who might well respond to the Werewolf cause, and not only conduct a campaign of sabotage behind our lines but carry vital information across the river to the German troops still in the battle.

Yet, wherever we drove, by day or by night, through the tortuous streets of this great industrial area, we could find

no sign of resentment. The men and women we stopped on the streets to ask the way were polite and helpful; they gathered round in bunches when they heard us speaking German, and bombarded us with questions: How far had we advanced? When would the War be over? Where were the Russians? At Krefeld one of the heads of the American Military Government detachment was a newspaperman I had last met in 1934, at Flemington in New Jersey, when he was secretary to Governor Hoffman of New Jersey and I was a visiting journalist from Britain, come to describe the trial of Bruno Hauptmann for the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby. He was delighted to see us and obviously overjoyed at the opportunity to talk about his work. His office in the Town Hall looked down upon some of the worst bomb damage in the city; two miles away American troops were in action against Nazi soldiers holding out just across the Rhine; and yet this, to this young American, might have been a peace-time civic crisis back in his home state, and he handled everything that came his way with the same cool, capable enthusiasm.

Sitting at a separate desk in his office was a young girl in a red skirt and jumper; and when the Captain was stuck for figures or for facts about the situation in the town he would turn to her and say: "Now you know that, Josephine. How many factories have we got working now?", or "What was the name of that Nazi gasworks' chief we gaoled last week?"

Josephine would give him the information in slow, slightly accented English. She listened all the time, sometimes breaking into the conversation to correct her chief, and it was obvious that she held a confidential position, indeed, and that few secrets of military government in Krefeld were unknown to her.

The Captain, catching our questioning glance, said: "Josephine is German, but don't let that worry you. Jose-

phine's the most valuable thing we have in the office. You could run the military government without me and the rest of the officers, probably, but you couldn't do it without her. You don't like the Nazis, do you, Josephine?"

The girl's lips tightened. "No, sir," she said. "I don't like the Nazis."

"We don't let anyone work for us until they've been 'screened' for their past political associations," the Captain said. "Josephine's parents used to run two of the restaurants in the town. They were known to be completely anti-Nazi, and anti-war. Josephine is twenty, and she's a living refutation of the claim that all young people in Germany are Nazis. Her father and mother brought her up to hate Hitler and war; we are convinced of her democratic background and of her willingness to help. She came to us as a volunteer because, she said, she thought the best way of getting Germany back on her feet again was for all those Germans interested in the country's welfare to volunteer to co-operate with the Allies, to work beside them in the job of rehabilitating the country. We were a bit sceptical about it when she said all this one afternoon, the second day we arrived, and we took her name and address and said we'd keep her in mind. She went away, but we could see she wasn't satisfied. A few days later she came back again, with statistics about the town that she told us she thought we might want—how many people there were, where they were living, how many cars were available as transport, and little details like that, including a lot that we hadn't got from our examination of the Nazi officials in the town. We thought that was possibly a way she had thought up of worming her way into our confidence, so she could get her hands on some of our secrets to send across to the Nazis over the river. But she kept coming in every day with more information." The Captain shrugged in reminiscence, and grinned. "We were short of English speakers, and she

did some translating and interpreting for us. We were in a jam about getting some letters away, and she sat down at the typewriter and did them for us. Soon she became indispensable to us. She knew the town, she seemed able to *put us on to the best people; she warned us about men who had concealed their Nazi records and were trying to get us to give them jobs. She brought in a lot of others to help us in our work of restoring some sort of life to Krefeld. And . . . well, during this Werewolf business recently she's been worth her weight in ingots."*

The Captain got up and went to a map of Krefeld on the wall. "You see, this is a peculiar town. The War has passed it by, and yet it hasn't, if you see what I mean. The Nazis have retreated, but they're only just across the river, and to get at them we've had to evacuate the whole of the suburb of Krefeld-Uerdingen which runs along the Rhine bank; which means taking twenty-odd thousand people from their homes mighty quick, without even giving them a chance to move their belongings. Now, that's a military area, with lots of things going on there we don't want Germans to see; and anyone venturing in there is liable to get shot. But you can't stop some people from sending their daughters or small sons back to fetch a coat, or a dinner-set, or a case of wine which they've left behind, and obviously all the trespassers we've had couldn't have been spies. On the other hand, some of them might well be. And that's where Josephine's been invaluable."

Josephine, it seems, had had a bright idea.

"She organised herself into a consulting bureau to whom citizens could come, giving the address of their house in the evacuated area, the list of what they wanted out of it, and once a day we sent a lorry down with troops in it to pick up the stuff and bring it back. That made it easier to decide whether intruders were spies or not. Then she organised the citizens into an anti-Werewolf campaign. Our intel-

ligence officers knew that there were one or two Nazi fanatics still left in the town—sacked officials and embittered youths, mostly—who might respond to the Werewolf call; but save for a few ringleaders we didn't know who they were, what they were planning, and how large their forces were. Josephine had the bright idea of enlisting the support of the German people here in Krefeld to find out.

"You see," said the Captain, "these people are tired of war. It isn't that they love the Allies—after the bombing and shelling they've had from us that would hardly be likely—but they do realise that Hitler has lost this War, that the sooner it's over the better, and they do want to show us their willingness to pay for their past mistakes and get going once more on a new peace-time basis. Josephine exploited that willingness. She pointed out to these people that the Werewolves couldn't win the War, they would only delay its final outcome; and she appealed for their co-operation in nipping in the bud all activity that looked like developing. She organised a group of her Father's friends, most of them with good records as Socialists, Communists and Social Democrats, to keep in touch with each district; and as a result the names began to pour in and details of what was being planned. In short the Werewolf campaign, which in any case never got much of a following, was itself sabotaged before it could get going. So," said the Captain, with a twinkle in his eye, "you begin to understand why Josephine knows so much about this office. We have taken a chance with her and some of her friends. We believe that they are sincere when they say that they want to help, that they want to make up for past mistakes, that they want Germany to take her place beside the other nations of Europe and build in future for common peace instead of for war. Isn't that it, Josephine?"

She had been listening intently, and vigorously nodded her head. "It is very difficult to talk about these things," she

said, "because whatever I say, I cannot hope to convince you completely of my sincerity. It is natural that you should think us servile when we say we want to help. In fact," she said, "it is very hard sometimes not to be defiant and arrogant when you look at us sceptically, just to show you that we still have our pride. But there are many of us here in Krefeld today who do honestly want to help. We are very ignorant of what has been happening in the world. It has been hard to get the real facts. We know we have been deceived in many things. But we are anxious to learn the truth, to be allowed to show our willingness to atone for what we have allowed to be done. Sometimes, though," she added, "it is difficult. There is my Father, for instance, and the workers at the gasworks and the textile plants. They wish to re-form the Socialist and the Social Democratic Parties they used to have, and to get the people once more interested in democratic ideas; but the Captain will not allow it because headquarters say there must be no political activity. There are difficulties, and we understand them and we do not grumble about them, but sometimes we wonder if you have not, you British and Americans, fallen into the German pitfall, and made your organisation too rigid, too inflexible in the face of local conditions."

We let her talk; and it was pleasant to hear her talking, after the repressions of Suchteln. She might be sincere or not (after a half-hour acquaintance I am not prepared to say), but she sounded sincere, and if she spoke the truth she opened up new possibilities in dealing with the German people.

"Of course," said the Captain, as he took us down the stairs, "she may have been put in by the Party just to get information, she may be a Nazi fanatic who is prepared to do anything to get news about us. But I can't believe it, somehow. I think she's telling the truth. Don't think we are altogether suckers, anyway. We keep our eye on Josephine, in our different ways, more than any other German

in this town because of her opportunities, and because we trust her with so much. If she makes one suspicious move, she will be disposed of without a thought." He solemnly crossed his fingers. "Hope to God not, though," he said. "What a goddamned mess my office would get into now without Josephine."

If I had written about Josephine and the position of trust she occupied in Krefeld, at that critical moment, when stupid rules and regulations were still being rigidly adhered to, I think she would have been dismissed at once, and the Captain packed off back to the United States in disgrace, or at least, since he was so indispensably efficient, soundly rebuked; such was the atmosphere around Supreme Headquarters on the subject of Germans at that time. In actual fact, such reliance upon Germans—upon Josephines and Josefs, upon men and women of goodwill whose help was not spurned just because they were of enemy blood—was to be found all over the British and American occupied zones even then; it was the only way in which understaffed military governments could strive for even the semblance of normal life; and where such co-operation was not appealed to there were grim things happening.

When a staff of ten officers, and twenty other ranks are sent to govern a city with a population of anything up to half a million, with only a small squad of troops to keep order, with the main body of the army scores of miles away, co-operation with the citizens is the only possible method; and, if it is to produce results, it must be co-operation based on mutual desire for good rather than upon the threat of reprisals. In the Rhineland's cities military governments could always call in plenty of troops should the civilians refuse their aid (in fact, they never had to within my knowledge), but farther into Germany there were great tracts of land where soldiers were few, where cities were attacked, occupied and then passed by our troops

within forty-eight hours, where there were no military trappings to display and awe the citizens. In those towns military government officials relied upon tact and a mutual desire for order to restore peace and life to their parish, and some (as I shall tell later) did it so extraordinarily well that they accomplished miracles. Others did not, and many besides themselves suffered for it.

Wherever we drove through the Rhineland those first weeks in April the feelings of the German people were unmistakable. The War was not yet over but they knew it was lost, and they were engaged in an instinctive effort to save something from the wreck. There were the Nazi officials who crawled and lick-spittled in an attempt to curry favour and save either their necks, their liberty, or their jobs. There were the rich industrialists and landed gentry who had friends in England or America, and were rude and unpleasant, and confident that their friend Hiram This or Viscount That would get them out of trouble. There were the odd groups of young people here and there, teen-age Hitler *Jugend* and *Bund Deutsche Mädeln* mostly, who were defiant because their spirits were sore, their burning faiths and dreams, their beliefs and ideals, destroyed by the men who so corruptly had called them forth; and now they were bewildered and angry because they had nothing. But the mass of the people were casting off National Socialism like an old coat, almost without grief or regret, some more and some less conscious of the guilt they shared in the support they had given it, determined to forget it and to work to re-create, in co-operation with their conquerors, the things that had been destroyed. They were fertile ground indeed, then, for a policy of re-education—if only there had been one.

Queer things happened in the Rhineland in those days. There was, for instance, the day we were in Bonn. We

were walking down the street to look again at Beethoven's house, and feeling sick and apprehensive as we saw the piles of bomb debris. Less than a mile away there was a battle going on, just across the river, and every now and then an over-range shell would crash somewhere near by. Yet there were Germans walking, unconcerned, in the town, and, as we got nearer to the house, a man halted, looked at us, and said in French: "You are going to Herr Beethoven's house? Do not worry. It is unharmed."

He walked with us to the house itself, and stood, a little back from us, watching our faces as we looked at it.

"You are fond of music?" he asked, in German this time. "We had many good concerts in Bonn. I wonder when we shall hear more. You have seen our University?"

No, we said; nor had we time to go today.

"A pity," he said. "It is very fine." He listened for a moment to the rattle of machine-guns down the river, an expression of remote speculation upon his face. Then he fumbled in his pocket, handed us a pamphlet, clicked his heels, bowed, and turned away.

It was not a proclamation from the Werewolves, but a tourist pamphlet in French, containing pictures and descriptive matter about the architectural treasures of Bonn.

At Homberg, on the west bank of the Rhine, American troops had taken over a quarter of the town, ranged their guns along the bank and were firing into Nazi concentrations in Duisburg, over the river. Sporadic shelling answered the barrage. The Americans had turned a grocery store into a company headquarters; inside the Captain and his staff directed operations amid the aromatic smells of tea and thyme and soap; two hundred yards away was the river bank, where snipers lay, with their telescopic-sighted rifles, to pick off anyone who showed himself or herself among the twisted girders across the way; and amid the crash of the guns and the slow chip-chip of the rifles, the children played in

the streets, ignoring the half-humorous, half-irritable demands of the sentries that they go on home. While we were there some prisoners came along the street in a lorry, and halted for a moment while the driver asked the way. German housewives and American soldiers came out to look at them, and suddenly one of the Americans threw up a packet of cigarettes out of his K-rations, then another followed suit, and another, until seven or eight lots of cigarettes must have reached the eager hands of the dusty prisoners. The housewives watched silently. Then one by one they went into their houses for gifts for the prisoners: glasses of water, hunks of bread and cheese, magazines. The prisoners smiled and shouted their thanks in English and in German. The Americans began to grin and shout good-humoured cries like: "Don't worry, you guys. You're out of it. You're lucky Joes." The housewives laughed too, and shouted in their turn; and when the lorry went on its way women and Americans alike waved to it. Then, with a nod to each other and a few ribald calls and whistles from the soldiers, the housewives went back into their houses.

That night they sent over two boxes of cigars and three or four bottles of schnapps to the company headquarters, and when we called back later on there were smokes for me and drinks for both of us.

"If General Patton hears about this, they'll hang me," the Captain said. "Fancy getting gifts from the Heinies. The hell with it, I think it's a good thing. First time I've got a bottle of liquor in Germany without shooting someone for it."

CHAPTER TWO

THOSE WERE THE days when we were still thirsting for news of what had been happening inside the Reich during the five years of war. City by city, province by province, Germany was falling into our hands; and yet we still knew little about life beyond the front line, still had little authentic information either about Hitler and his Party, about the German General Staff, or about the people themselves. Then, like a flood, the information came.

That April the last great German stand had failed, and now we *knew* that the War was all but over. A quarter of a million troops trapped inside the Ruhr had failed to break through the ring of American soldiers flung around them, and were giving up. One by one, great cities like Duisburg, Essen, Dortmund, Wupperthal, all the rich coal-mines and steel mills and factories of this industrial heart of Europe, were being delivered up to us. Each day Gwenda and I drove over the Rhine to enter a new city, to drive through more miles of streets and factories and yards. As for the people of the Ruhr, they left us in no doubt of what they thought of our arrival. They lined the streets, men and women packed side by side and dressed in their best suits and brightest frocks, and they waved and shouted at us. When we stopped the car to talk to them, they surged around us and bubbled words at us. There was no question of non-fraternisation here; we could only have non-fraternised by force. In Essen itself the sight of an Englishwoman in uniform sent great crowds of girls streaming over to Gwenda, and when they discovered that we could talk German scores more came to join them. They brought us wine and cups of schnapps or liqueur. They pressed biscuits upon us. They bombarded us

with questions, about how the War was going, about conditions in England, about what was going to happen to them. They were greedy for news. They had been slightly tipsy with drink when they had first seen us; the excitement of talking to us, aided by communal drinks from the bottles being freely passed around, soon had them singing and shouting.

There was no doubt that the Ruhr was happy that our armies had come, glad that the War was over. When I looked around at the horrible carnage that had been wrought all through that great industrial zone by our bombers, it seemed obvious why. Not a house was unscarred by bombs; every factory was an ugly vista of torn and twisted steel; great piles of bricks and boilers and derricks sprawled over the yards and the roads and the railway lines. It was a grim horror, the Ruhr, and it still is, and will be for a long time. Little wonder, I thought at the time, that the citizens of the Ruhr are celebrating, knowing that our coming means the end of all the things that have made life so unbearable for them these past few years.

Yet, looking back on it, that welcome that the American troops got from the workers of the Ruhr that April remains one of the most amazing happenings of the War. One could understand the people being relieved at our coming; one could understand the old warriors from the trade unions of pre-Hitler days, the staunch anti-Nazis who had escaped the concentration camps, coming out to welcome us. But the noisy, demonstrative greeting of so many, the obvious happiness of all who saw us, was a phenomenon that I find hard to explain; yet there it was. The conquering army rode into the Ruhr and thus sealed the doom of Nazi Germany; and the German workers, for whom this was defeat, cheered our coming and celebrated it in practically every city we visited. As the convoys of German prisoners drove out to the cages they went past walls already scrawled in chalk with

signs like: *Weg mit Hitler*, *Weg mit Krieg*, and calls for international unity among the workers.

And, as we discovered when we went back to the Ruhr on subsequent visits, the workers had been better protected than most other citizens of the Reich, so possibly relief from bombing was not the explanation. Great sectors of the Krupp works and other big industrial undertakings had been sent underground, and when bombs were falling the workers could work, eat or sleep, all below ground, in almost certain safety. They had been privileged, too. There were special rations served in the great underground canteens; there was less of a drink shortage in the Ruhr than anywhere else; and the shops had silk stockings and underclothes, lipsticks and powder for sale in plenty. Even by Paris and Brussels standards, it was a revelation to Gwenda; and compared with the austerities of wartime Britain, it was paradise. Did our own factory girls get bribes like these?

We drove aimlessly through the great built-up area that is the Ruhr, calling at a works here or a coal-mine there, talking to the Germans, or to the French or Belgian imported workers we encountered. From the Belgians and the French the story of life in the Ruhr was a horrific one; there were grim tales of how they had been dragged from their homes and sent into slavery, of the terror of the bombing raids, of the bestial treatment they had received at German hands. From the Germans it was more tersely, less graphically told. We balanced one side against the other and gradually got our picture. Right until the last the Ruhr had remained the industrial centre of the German war machine. Scores of its factories had been evacuated and tens of thousands of workers along with them; but the basic industries had remained where they always were, most of them above ground, relying upon Todt organisation squads to get them going again when they were hit by bombs, with satellite factories below ground to keep the industry ticking over while repairs

were being made. The main shops and yards of Krupps had been completely destroyed by R.A.F. bombers, and yet even during the last days Krupps was still operating in Essen, and thousands of workers signed on for labour on the day we entered the city. Neither foreign workers nor Germans talked much of sabotage, and when they did they were vague, or made up highly romanticised stories that somehow didn't ring true. We felt that there had been little serious effort to impede the German war machine, principally because of the unceasing watch kept upon the workers by the Gestapo men working among them.

Yet foreigners and Germans alike talked of secret organisations among them, through which they had brought pressure to bear upon the Nazi-sponsored trade unions, bettering conditions and wages, improving food rations and accommodation; and several Germans spoke of having received, through the medium of foreign workers from France and Belgium and Russia, messages from their comrades abroad, exhorting them to keep up their hearts and to work for a democratic victory. They were only sorry, the honest ones told us, that the ever-watchful eyes of the Gestapo had prevented them from doing more. When you pressed them they were hesitant, modest, almost fearful about it, as if the fear of the Gestapo was still with them. That feeling increased after the end of the War in Europe, when we went back to see them again; all through the Ruhr and the Rhineland, in June, a sudden fear seemed to grip the workers in those areas that the Gestapo was coming back.

Moving among those workers of the Ruhr, talking to these men and women who had built the guns and the bombing planes and the secret weapons which had helped to put Britain in such peril was a strange experience. When one experienced the goodwill of these people, realised how much they shared thoughts and ambitions with their fellow-workers in the Democracies, how similar were their hopes, it

was tragic to think of the five years they had spent building the weapons for wiping each other out, for creating suffering and privation among their own kind.

"Don't think that we didn't remember that," said one of the Ruhr workers to us. "There were enough Socialists and Social Democrats left among the workers here, when war began, to realise the futility and stupidity of it; enough to fight against the Nazi system for having made it possible. But anti-Nazism was a perilous job, and it was hard to get even those who sympathised to take the risk of death or imprisonment or torture. The Nazi propaganda among the workers was effective propaganda, don't forget. It pounded into the heads of the workers, in the first years of war, the delightful prospects that those years of victory presented to us. We got higher wages, and luxury goods from the conquered countries flowed in on us. It's very hard to persuade young men and women to hate a system that is bringing them comforts they have never known before. Yet we got quite a few. Then the years of victory changed to the years of trial and prospective defeat; and the Nazi propaganda changed with them. Now they promised us not rewards, but reprisals. We were the men and women, they said, who had built the weapons of war which had killed and maimed the people of Britain; and the people of Britain hated us and would take vengeance for it. Therefore, for our own sakes, we must continue working for the Nazis and stave off defeat. That was effective, too, though less so. But all through, small numbers of men worked against the Nazis, keeping the spirit of democracy alive."

And all through the War, in victory or defeat, there were those secret organisations of the Ruhr, groups of men in every factory who had kept touch, remote but tangible, with the outside world; groups who had genuinely hoped for Allied victory. Now, when the Allied armies occupied the Ruhr, they brought their organisations into the open, laid

bare the history of their activities for the inspection of our military government organisations, and asked permission to continue in public the anti-Nazi work they had pursued all through the War. They were so sure of permission being forthcoming that they chalked the walls of Essen and Wuppertal and Duisburg with announcements of their first meetings, and called upon their fellow-workers to flock to them. The workers came; but so did the military police. The ringleaders were arrested and taken away; released later, yes, but curtly told that there were to be no meetings, no political organising, no revival of any form of activity, even though it was anti-Nazi activity of long-standing. That happened within a week or two of the capture of the Ruhr, while there was still fighting in Germany, and the workers consoled themselves by thinking that everything would be all right once the War was over. Then they would be able to organise again.

But when the end of the War came it was just the same. The British had moved into the Ruhr when we paid our last visit. The workers we had talked with were still waiting; waiting for permission to hold meetings, to begin democratic activity again. And the answer was still no; a curt and decisive and definite no.

"We do not understand it," they said. "Do we have to go underground again, if we wish to form our anti-Nazi parties? We do not understand."

Meanwhile, in Cologne, and in many another Ruhr and Rhineland town, political parties were already operating underground: but pro-Nazi parties and pro-Army parties, preaching anti-democratic propaganda and pledging the return of Hitlerism. And many a young man and woman in the Ruhr, frustrated by the Allied ban on open political activity, embittered by idleness, humiliated by non-fraternisation rules, were beginning to join. No wonder the staunch and steadfast democratic leaders of the Ruhr were looking

worried, wondering whether the Gestapo wasn't coming back after all.

I said that suddenly, like a flood, the information about Germany came, and that just about describes it. With the collapse of the Ruhr pocket, a quarter of a million German troops crowded into the Allied prison cages, and among those troops were Army general after general, who seemed eager to tell all they knew about what had been going on behind the German lines these past few months. A friend of ours, who was intelligence officer of an American infantry division, was the "choke point" through which much of that information was coming. I remember the day he handed me the report he had written, after the collapse had begun; a report which began, in the American form of Intelligence Summary jargon:—

"When Julius Cæsar overran the pelted and fur-bearing Germans centuries ago, his P.W. wattle could have been no more flushed and crowded than our division cage today. There were Hungarians, German sailors, Wehrmacht infants, ancient spavined flak men, S.S. men, women auxiliaries, R.A.D. workers—anything the German Reich could turn out in uniform. The uniforms themselves, for that matter, would have made Jacob's coat look like a Boston banker's swallowtail. The crush was tremendous; the prisoners arrived in standard trucks for the most part, but also in captured buses, charabancs and trailers. One general drove up in a Mercedes Benz. The area where the prisoners were searched looked like the back deck of the Albany nightboat, and the take in penknives, razorblades, nail scissors and hand mirrors was enormous. Before midnight over ten thousand prisoners had passed through our cage, and interrogators who had leaped avidly at second lieutenants for information earlier in the day merely grunted at anything less than a colonel in the afternoon, and by night even

generals had trouble making themselves heard in the babel. It was a lovely sight, and there was some lovely information."

That day, however, the most spectacular story came not from one of the generals but from a lowly lieutenant. As we parked our pick-up van beside the interrogation hut, he was being taken away by two American guards, back into the seething turmoil of captured Germans who stretched across the landscape as far as the eye could see. But at the sight of us, the interrogation officer shouted through the window for him to be brought back, and to me he said: "Would you like to hear the full story about the attempt on Hitler's life last July? Well, here's one of the boys who were in on it."

Lieutenant Kurt von Kielmannsegg clicked his heels and gave us a precise and practised military salute as he stepped into the room. He was a slight, blond-haired young man with a handsome face that looked peaked by hunger and peevish from inbreeding, but his voice was low and pleasant. He was slow and arrogant at first, conscious that his story had attracted attention and realising the potentials of it for increasing his own comfort; but he was young enough, too, to find the retelling of it, before yet another audience, pleasant.

"My father was General-Major Kurt von Kielmannsegg, attached to the General Staff in Berlin. He was hung by the People's Court for having been one of the chief participators in the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler on July 20, 1944. I am a fugitive from the Gestapo for having also been one of the participants. I will tell you about the plot. . . ."

Once he started he was so glib and easy that he might have learned the story off by heart; maybe he had. But as we were to find as we questioned the generals during the next forty-eight hours, it was a story that seemed to be completely authentic.

It was some weeks before the invasion of Europe by the Allied armies, on the 6th of June, 1944, that the Oberkom-

mando of the Wehrmacht began their first discussions of what subsequently developed into the attempt on Hitler's life. So said Von Kielmannsegg. For months before that they had been chafing increasingly under the military dictatorship of the Fuehrer; the mistakes on the Russian front had been mounting; the growing air power of the Allies was making the internal situation at home more and more unpleasant, and thereby exacerbating military morale at the front, as a result of letters from home. The pride of the military commanders was sore from repeated rejection by the Fuehrer of their suggestions that different tactics be employed in the East, that the concentrated attention upon secret weapons be diverted to some extent to the immediate production of fighting planes, and that a change be made in the political plan abroad, calculated to appeal more strongly to the war weariness in Britain. Field-Marshal Bock, Keitel and Witzleben were particularly anxious that Hitler should be divested of his control of military tactics and strategy, and even completely shorn of his political power before full disaster overtook the Reich. They had a valuable supporter in Reich-Marshal Goering (who had taken to drugs again and was sulking because Hitler had rejected his advice to concentrate upon fighter planes and put rocket and other *Vergeltungswaffe* plans into abeyance for the time being). With one or two exceptions, practically the whole of the static General Staff at the War Department in Berlin knew of the Oberkommando meeting convened in April, 1944, to discuss the removal of Adolf Hitler: yet word of it, if it did reach the Gestapo, never went beyond Himmler; the S.S. Leader may have known what was going on, but if so he did not interfere; he neither tried to stop it nor signalled his willingness to help. Perhaps he had some knowledge of the proposals which were made at the meeting by Von Bock, which were that, when the *coup d'état* succeeded, Goering should be appointed Fuehrer in Hitler's place and Himmler be his

deputy, and that Goebbels share the fate of Hitler and be quickly disposed of.

Von Kielmannsegg maintained that, from the first, the scheme for the removal of Hitler was made primarily to give the General Staff back its control of military affairs and the military production programme; it did not accept the inevitability of defeat at that time; it believed that the Invasion could be successfully withstood, if not beaten back. In those preliminary discussions the question of defeat was never mentioned; later, after June 6, and the drive towards Paris, several of the Field-M Marshals panicked, and the anti-Hitler plot was speeded up, so that the Fuehrer would be gone and the Wehrmacht be in the saddle, and able to decide at what point to give up, if the worst came to the worst.

The plot itself, Kielmannsegg told us, was simple. It relied completely upon Hitler's interest in Wehrmacht equipment: a new army knapsack was being planned, and two experimental models were taken to the Fuehrer's headquarters. They were packed with various items of a soldier's equipment, including a razor case and a soap tin. Both razor case and soap tin contained explosive, connected with a small but elaborate timing apparatus hidden in the bottom of each knapsack; the idea being that if either razor container or soap tin were opened there would be an explosion, and that if they were not touched the timing mechanism would set them off. Unfortunately, the timing mechanism did not work as had been hoped. The Fuehrer called for the knapsacks and spent some moments looking them over; then he moved into the next room of his headquarters, and had just gone through the door when the explosion occurred. Five members of Hitler's staff were killed outright and several more wounded, but Hitler himself suffered only concussion and lacerations of the arm.

"It was an unfortunate blow to our hopes," the blond young lieutenant remarked. "If everything had happened

as we . . .” he seemed about to go off into a peroration, and his voice was rising, and then he suddenly caught himself and resumed his story in his normal voice.

“Once the plot had failed, the Gestapo came into it with efficiency and ferocity,” he said grimly. “Every member of the Wehrmacht was suspect. We heard that Hitler, who was recuperating in bed, was alternating between bouts of tears and bouts of fury in which he demanded the heads of the whole of the Staff in vengeance. There were new arrests every day. Kietel, Von Bock and Witzleben were all suspected, and for many days their lives were in danger; then the Gestapo seemed to make up its mind. Suspicion passed from Von Bock and Keitel, both of whom visited the Fuehrer and swore an oath of loyalty to him; but Witzleben was arrested. He was the principal of those members of the Staff who were tried for the plot. My father was among the prisoners; I had been arrested too, and so had my mother. I never saw either of them again. My father was sentenced to be hanged along with Witzleben. My mother”—his thin, sensitive and overbred face twitched—“was being shamefully treated when last I heard of her. As for me, friends helped me one night to escape from the prison in Berlin where I had been lodged; another officer named Wolff and I were brought out of the barracks, with the connivance of some of the S.S. guards, and taken to the outskirts of Potsdam in an army lorry. There we jumped out and began making our way West. When we reached Hanover we hid for some days with my sister; she got us civilian clothes and arranged false names and identity cards for us, and we went out into the fields on the edge of the city, hiring ourselves out as farm labourers. But someone must have recognised us, or as the weeks passed by we must have become careless; in any case, my sister warned us one night that the Gestapo was on our trail again. We decided that the only thing to do was to continue on Westwards in the hope that

we would meet the Anglo-American forces and surrender to them. Wolff was luckier than me. He got across the lines one night. I was caught instead by the S.S. Feldgendarmarie. The great retreat had begun and because of my youth I was presumed to be a straggler who was trying to get away from the battle. I was sent under escort to the Battle Group headquarters of General von Karst." Young Von Kielmannsegg shrugged. "I realised that I had come to the crossroads. It was useless to go on with the masquerade, for someone was sure to recognise me. I decided to make a clean breast of everything to General von Karst himself, and he, more in need of company commanders than confessed assassins, put me in charge of a front-line alarm company. I stayed with them for several weeks, until I heard that the Gestapo was on my trail again; so I deserted once more and hid until your troops had overrun us. Then I gave myself up." He paused and then said: "That is all I know about the plot against Hitler. I would like to say that the whole of the Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht would have been overjoyed had it succeeded." He gestured bitterly towards the sprawling mass of humanity in the cages outside the hut. "It would have saved us from this. At least we should have reached defeat honourably and decently."

We let him go then, and with another heel-click and a precise salute, and a lofty look upon his face, he went out; a young and very minor, but nevertheless indubitable member of the German Staff in the old tradition. I remember thinking as I watched him that it wouldn't be men like Kietel and Kesselring and Busch that we would have to be careful about in the years to come, once this war was over (even a sceptic like myself couldn't believe that they would be allowed their freedom of movement again), but young men like Kurt von Kielmannsegg. You might teach the young men and women who had worshipped Hitler the folly and the crime of their faith, but the tradition that was in Von

Kielmannsegg, that was vibrant in his throat as he talked, was something far deeper and far more difficult to eradicate, and it wouldn't care what political power it supported so long as it could be given expression. There, I thought, as I watched him go, is the German General Staff of 1965—if we don't watch out.

We heard the story of the plot against Hitler several times after that, and with each telling the solidarity of the General Staff in their determination to get rid of Hitler and take control of the affairs of the Reich for themselves became increasingly clear. We talked the next day to General-Leutnant Fritz Bayerlein, whom I had first heard of when he was Chief of Staff to Rommel in the Western Desert. Now, with Generals Waldenburg and Von Lüttwitz, principal commanders in the Ruhr, he had capitulated to the Americans—"without the permission of the Fuehrer", he dryly added.

Bayerlein had been in the Hitler plot, and Rommel had been in it too, he said. "Without the interference of Hitler the invasion of France might have been held," he told us. "Our information was that the attack upon France would be launched in the Calais-Dieppe area, and therefore Rommel had his battle headquarters in that district, and my force, which contained the bulk of our German armour, was concentrated to the South, but too far inland for my satisfaction. Rommel asked that it be brought nearer to the coast, where it could move fast along the lateral roads to the threatened area. But Hitler had an intuition," he said scornfully. "He was convinced that between Calais and Dieppe the main throw of the Allies would be made, and that if we remained concentrated within striking distance of that area we would be able to smash the invasion almost before it had begun. So, when the blow came, I was too far away; I began to move as soon as the situation became clear, of course, but

only at night, so that we would not be vulnerable to the enemy air forces. Then Hitler, who had taken everything calmly, panicked suddenly. He sent urgent messages to Rommel; he forced him to cancel his plans; he ordered me to ignore the threat by air and move my tanks at all speed to the battle area. We suffered enormous losses as a result. After that, interference became unbearable. Hitler insisted on having news of the minutest nature about our plans; if a brigade group was transferred from one area to another it could only be done on orders signed by Hitler himself. Often he made decisions over Rommel's head. Rommel, who had been a strong supporter of Hitler, could stand it no longer and heartily concurred with the July plot. And I too."

Of all the German generals I talked to in those days, Bayerlein was the most interesting. He was full of information; he was frank and open about the part he and his fellow-generals had played in the preparation for the War. He was the first German general to admit war guilt.

"I do not deny that I was a member of the Nazi Party," he said. "I do deny that I believed in National Socialism. I am a professional soldier, and a believer in the destiny of the Reich; I never had time for the political philosophies of the Party, but like most of my comrades I found Nazism the most amiable system under which to exist and develop my ideas. The Party men interfered, of course, and in the end they interfered too much; if some of the men at the top of the Wehrmacht had been more efficient," he added, "that tendency might well have been nipped in the bud. Well, it was not, and hence our situation today. I do not speak for my colleagues, but I speak for myself when I admit my culpability in bringing about the situation as we have it today. I was only a lip-service Nazi, but I do not see any reason to deny now that I worked as much as they did to promote this War, that in fact I, and many of my comrades, goaded them and helped to provoke the situations. We were

ambitious men; ambitious to retrieve the disasters of the last war, ambitious to make ourselves masters of Europe and in possession of a great Russian Empire, with the greatest military machine the world has ever known under our command. That was our driving goal right from those first days, after the end of the last war, when we re-formed in secret under Von Seeckt and began drilling the Black Wehrmacht that would one day form the cadre of our army. It was a good army, defeated more by superior industrial machines on your side and stupid fools like Hitler on ours than by better strategy. We have failed through our mistakes once more. And I think it will be a long time now before we are given a chance to fail again."

Then he turned to the American colonel who was listening to him, and added:

"But don't forget that it takes a very few men, if they are clever and determined men, to make a general staff. And to make a general staff you do not need generals. All you need are a few fanatical officers and a political party to back them, and a people willing to be used as material upon which to experiment. We have gone such a long way in experiment here in Germany now that I feel that we shall not much longer need bulk armies to fight wars. The weapons we were on the verge of creating can do the work of whole divisions. They will be the temptation, the incentive to gather together and plan again. Yours is a difficult task, for I feel that as long as she is defeated Germany will always have men among her who will want to try again."

"Not," said the Colonel, "if we can help it. This time the class that produces the German General Staff is going to be destroyed, root and branch of it."

"Ah yes," said General Bayerlein. "You say that now. But you will not stop it—not if the bitterness of defeat is still rankling in my people."

CHAPTER THREE

ONE OF THE principal troubles about information from Germany these days is that it is based too much on first impressions. The one certainty about the Reich in these first months of peace, the only certainty, is that everything one sees is transitory: the moods of the people, the mode of their life, the attitude towards them of their conquerors, even one's own standpoint, are so much conditioned by the War so recently ended that it would be false to accept them as being necessarily genuine or permanent.

How often have we war correspondents, debouched into a newly-won town with our forward columns, excited and tensed by dangers experienced and dangers not yet completely overcome, typed our dispatches beside the fretting dispatch-rider and rushed them away, telling the breathless story of what we had found in the town and what the people had told us . . . only a few hours later to wish we could destroy what we had written, or alter it and change it to give it the proper perspective. I remember driving through the streets of Asmara, capital of Eritrea, on April 1st, 1941, with the first of the victorious British troops. The windows were closed and barred; only the bougainvillea on the balconies waved to us in greeting; save for a carefully lifted curtain, as quickly dropped, and the momentary glimpse of a face, Asmara's 40,000 Italians might have been dead. Certainly, one felt that they resented us. That was at ten o'clock in the morning. Yet by one p.m. the windows were opened, the populace was cheering and waving, and the bougainvillea was being picked by the Italian womenfolk and strewn upon us as we rode below.

I remember, more recently, the correspondents who raced into Duisburg in the Ruhr with the first American combat

columns and cabled back the story of a city that had been destroyed : every factory rusty and wrecked, not from bombing but from disuse ; sewers burst, gas and electricity gone, the population long since departed. It was a grisly tale, and a genuine enough story, of one part of Duisburg on one single afternoon ; but, as was soon shown, Duisburg, though tremendously damaged by Allied bombing, was by no means destroyed ; its population had taken to the fields or the cellars for the first nervous, uncertain twenty-four hours of occupation, but they streamed back as soon as food needs became urgent, and they heard stories of looting and stealing that were going on in the city. Duisburg today is a mess, but many of its chimneys are smoking again and it is far from being a desert.

Similarly, so much was written from Germany in the early days of occupation that would now, I feel, be re-written. It is not so much that the facts were wrong, but that, in the rush of day-to-day reporting, they were given the wrong emphasis and the wrong conclusions drawn. There were some mistakes ; there were some prejudices ; there was much reporting that was false, that gave wrong impressions, because the writers were merely ignorant, both of the language of the country they were in and of the origin of what they were describing. But even the prejudiced and the ignorant would, I think, write differently about Germany now.

Many observers who followed the Allied armies into Germany began to feel after a time that the propaganda of the Ministry of Information and the Office of War Information had, in fact, often done its work too well. To those who had never been in Germany before, who had read all the books and pamphlets and stories, this land in which they found themselves was a land of ogres and witches ; bowler-hatted, black-suited ogres and well-dressed and extremely personable witches, maybe. But the politeness and hospitality of the one, and the smiles of the other, were just disguises

with which to lull them into security, these ingenuous folk thought, to make them feel that the Germans were just like any other people, eating the same sort of food, doing the same sort of jobs, showing the same sort of thankfulness that the War was over. It was all a trick. You let yourself be lulled by the flocks of children in a household and the eggs and bacon the housewife cooked you; you had a conversation with one of the girls from the village; and before you knew where you were you were bewitched and lifting your hand and saying "Heil Hitler".

If some of the more naïve observers were not thinking along these lines, then they gave every impression that they were. Hence the spate of stories that came back to our newspapers, at one time, of the little German who was always sidling up to you when you stopped in a German town. He would ask if he could help you, tell you anything about the town, set you on your right road. Then when he had got you in conversation, he would find out whether you were English, and then he would say how much he had always liked England, and what a pity they had not been allies instead of enemies, fighting the common foe of them both, the Russians. Sometimes he would perform his Number Two routine and sneer at the Americans instead of the Russians. If you were American, of course, then he just ran down the British and the Russians instead. There must have been many scores of these small, polite little men preaching this evil doctrine in Germany those few weeks, because practically all the correspondents met him and sent back stories about him.

But the conviction that all appearances in Germany were deceptive and that the nicest Germans were really rogues was sometimes convenient, too; it eased your conscience when you went into a house and saw something in a glass case that might be worth a good deal of money on the black market in Brussels. The householder might look like the small wood merchant he said he was, but you knew very

well that he was the secret leader of the local Gestapo, and that his hands were still dripping with the blood of thousands of slaves; so you need have no compunction in breaking the glass and taking what was inside.

Human sensibilities get quickly blunted; the coat of civilisation that covers us is thin and easily divested. It was surprising how the looting fever attacked even the staidest members of the Army and those attached to it in those last days of the German stand in the Western and Central Reich. I am not talking of the front-line troops; their fever is understandable and forgivable; in any case what they usually take is utilitarian. It was those who came after, the men in the non-combatant jobs, whose background suggested they could have resisted the temptations of the German chaos of last April and May. Yet very few did. There was an incentive to believe that all Germans were bad, that the whole race of them should be rigorously punished for the War, that nothing too brutal could be done to them as a reprisal: for that gave you justification for what you did. You could go into a farmhouse and look around, and if there was a radio you could steal it, if there was a refrigerator you could wreck it; you could strip the carpets from the floors and the pictures from the walls, empty the wine cellar and force the farmer, and his wife at the point of a gun to give up all their chickens and geese while your chauffeur killed a pig in the sty and put it in the back of the car—because, of course, none of these things you were taking really belonged to the farmer and his wife. They obviously could never have afforded them.

No, they were all stolen from the Occupied countries, from Holland and France and Belgium; and all you were doing was taking them back to Brussels and handing them back to the Belgians, through the black market, with a reasonable profit for your trouble. If you did this thing too often and got pangs of conscience, then you could always

assuage them by working up a new hatred against the Germans, by writing a heated article justifying the way you felt and the things you did. It was surprising what licence, for instance, the discovery of the horrors of Belsen Camp gave to some of the men with the army. Why, nothing was too bad to commit against a nation which allowed things like Belsen! So you loaded up your car with sheets and clothing-material, with giant cheeses, with ornaments and silverware. Surprising people, even staid English officers, began to loot like mad. The staid fifty-year-old would tell you how to get a car: "It's no use going to garages. Field Security and Military Government usually put sentries on those. What you do is drive around until you see a house with a garage. Then you get the owner and take the key off him. He's probably hidden the battery and the tyres, but if you show him a little persuasion he'll cough up quick enough."

There was the young man who specialised in adding machines and sporting guns, for their price on the Brussels market. There was the other young man, about to be married in Brussels to a Belgian girl, who looted the fowl and all the liquid refreshment for the wedding breakfast, and another who made his fifth trip back to Brussels with a load of ball-bearings. Ball-bearings, it seemed, were scarce in Belgium and commanded high prices on the market; they, together with a few carpets, a refrigerator, some pictures and the contents of a safe, had all been brought in from Germany, and had been easy to sell.

The black market in Brussels bought anything, so this same young man even made several trips back from Germany with slaughtered cows in the back of his car, and on one occasion, when a holiday closed butchers' shops and abattoirs, drove around for two days with it awkwardly packed onto the rear seats.

One of the reasons for the shortage of road transport in Germany today can be directly ascribed to the car-looting

fever which gripped most of the officers of all the armies in Germany those last few days of war. There were excuses for some. A division like Britain's Sixth Airborne picked up what cars and lorries it could find, because, as a force that had travelled to its destination by air, it was short of transport. That could hardly be said of most other divisions, and certainly not of the units following behind. Yet from divisional commanders downwards the officers got themselves cars, sometimes two and three cars. During one of the last battles, the commander of a British division, which was needed to make a fast advance, found his men had picked up so many German cars that his lines of traffic were almost twice their usual length and there were blockages throughout his area. He therefore issued an order to his military policemen to stop all private cars on the roads driven by members of the Army or civilians, and ask for permits; if permits were not forthcoming, then the cars were to be got off the road and "made so that they won't get on it again". In the next twenty-four hours scores of cars were stopped; scores of drivers confessed lack of papers. They were told to drive the cars into a field just off the road, and there the military policemen put tommy-gun shots into each tyre and into the cylinder head. Then petrol was sprinkled over the cars and they were burned.

All this was done during the excitement and chaos of war. Some of it was perhaps justified by military necessity. Some of it was, perhaps, an inevitable consequence of the resentment which all men felt against the Germans; looting, rape and murder were not unusual in those days (nor, in fact, are they even now), and the behaviour of British soldiers and officers was gentlemanly compared with that of the thousands of displaced persons who were roaming the countryside; but, whatever your attitude towards such behaviour, it certainly did not produce the atmosphere conducive to impartial or even thoughtful reporting of what was going on inside the Reich.

In the years before the War began, I used to know a young man named Gustav Müller. He was a member of the German Youth Movement, and one of his jobs was to take foreign youth groups—boy scouts and students and the like—around Germany and show off the triumphs of National Socialism. Sometimes, when distinguished foreigners came to the Reich, Gustav was called in to do his propaganda on them. We used to see a lot of him in the bar of the Adlon Hotel.

Gustav Müller had been to Oxford. He dressed and talked like it. He went out of his way to be pleasant. He was always claiming that he wasn't really a Nazi, that this was only his way of securing advancement in the Foreign Service, and that he thought Hitler and his gang were a dull and bourgeois lot.

That was in 1937. I didn't see Gustav again until I passed him on the street in Amsterdam in early 1940. He rushed up to greet me, as if we were old friends. He told a long story of how he had criticised the Nazis too often, and how the Gestapo had got on his trail and forced him to flee the Reich. How good it was to see me again. Could he tell me any stories about the Nazis that might be useful for my papers?

I made a few inquiries about Gustav, through our own Intelligence people and others, and found that Gustav was truly an exile. He had been banished from the Reich for having been mixed up in a scandal inside the Youth Movement; but I also discovered that Gustav was working hard to rehabilitate himself. He had got a job with the Gestapo, spying on other refugees and upon the British, and passing on the information he obtained. So I and some of my friends who worked for the Intelligence, kept in touch with Gustav and picked up a few scraps of news from him; and when Holland fell, and I was forced to escape, I forgot all about him. My young Dutch assistant didn't, however, for three

days after the capitulation Gustav Müller came to his house in the uniform of a Gestapo man and took him off for internment.

The point of this story is not that I met Müller in Germany this time. I unfortunately didn't. I have no knowledge of what became of him, and I only hope that he has met the nasty fate that his kind deserve. No, the point is that Müller's home was in Wesel. He had a house in Wesel, just beside the Rhine, and he was very sentimental about it. He was always showing us pictures of it, and though it was a quite ordinary little house he got almost lyrical about its beauties; it was the only thing he missed in his exile, he said. He called it *Magdalen*, in memory of his college days!

One afternoon in early April of this year, with Gwenda beside me, we bumped down the dusty incline to the Rhine and crossed the green, swift-flowing river to Wesel, and the start of our journey to the East; and I didn't need to search the town to find out what had happened to *Magdalen* in the years of war. I could see at a glance that *Magdalen*, like every other house in and around this once prosperous little Rhineland town, had disappeared. Surely the horror of war, the sheer blanket ruthlessness of it, is shown more vividly in Wesel than in all the towns in Germany. In Cologne there are still half-houses and half-buildings here and there, and the Cathedral stands almost untouched above the carnage around it. In the Ruhr there were still walls and chimneys and mineshafts standing, and miles and miles of road. But in Wesel there is nothing left except rubble, stinking with the dead beneath it and rotting in the hot afternoon sun; piles of sprawled brick and aimless papers jumbled along the river-bank. The roads have gone, too, and new ones made upon the foundation of the rubble; and so great is the desolation, so great and complete the ruin, that here we did not even see that most familiar sight in German cities today, the men and women and children picking in the ruins for what they could find.

There was nothing to find, for it was buried deep beneath the wreckage. Wesel had ceased to exist; and though I was sorry for Wesel I was glad that at least one of its houses had been smashed to pulp. I was glad that *Magdalen* had been destroyed, and I hoped that *Gustav Müller* had been hurt by its destruction.

The roads that day, I remember, were jammed as they have never been since with speeding transport. The long lines of American petrol bowlers and ammunition trucks roared over the tarmac on their way to the army fronts, with fuel to keep the tanks going and shells to keep them firing. In the other direction came more lorries, filled this time with prisoners-of-war: grim-faced, dusty, their Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe uniforms oiled and ragged; a Volkssturm man in a trilby hat, or desperately clutching a bowler, here and there among them; and occasionally a girl or a woman holding hard to the side of a lorry, every muscle in her face tensed with emotion as she looked at us.

There were the refugees, too. Every mile of the road we went East there were more of them—on foot, on bicycles, in carts and looted cars, hams and rolls of bread festooned around them. They waved wildly to us as we passed. They stormed up when we stopped, to offer bottles of schnapps and looted knick-knacks in return for cigarettes. They were wildly happy, because they were going home. Most of them were Dutch and Belgian, though there were many French, and these were mostly the genuine “slaves”; young men and women who had been taken to Germany against their will, who had worked for the Nazis only because they had been forced, or because of the pressure of their governments. They showed no hatred of the German people; they conversed with them as they passed, in fact, with a comradeship that struck us as odd at the time; they reserved their resentment for the Nazis who had uprooted them from their homes

and for the Gestapo which had persecuted them and their fellows.

Yes, the War was approaching the ultimate phase. The reports were coming in over the radio as we drove on. The Second Army was closing around Hamburg and Bremen. The American First Army was over the Elbe at Magdeburg and driving East. We were waiting for the announcement that might come at any moment—that the last attack by the Russians had begun against Berlin. Every mile of the road we could see evidence of the approaching end; the sound of it was in the air; the mien of the Germans, the resignation of them as they watched the convoys pass, arms going East, prisoners coming West, showed that they knew it, too. The violence of the War, the shelling and the bombing, the death and destruction, had gone past them now to some point further East, but the dust and desolation was all around them. This was the main highway our fighting troops had taken into the heart of Germany, and the signs of their passing were everywhere to be seen. No single village was without its bombed houses. Every church steeple had the same gaping shell-hole through it, where Allied gunners had fired to blast out the Nazi observer-officers. We did not need to be told where the enemy had made his stands, for the evidence was too blatant. The holes scuffed into the fields on the outskirts of the town, rimmed by a skim of white powder, where the mortar shells had fallen. The zigzag slit trench, in which they had cowered from the shells and the bullets and the rockets. The shredded, splintered bits of wood, which had once been tool-sheds scattered over the churned allotments. The bombed cemeteries, the headstones smashed, the rotting coffins poking through the earth, and the women and children covering them again and digging more graves for the new dead. And beyond, the black stumps of brick and stone that had once been the village. They came often, such scenes; I wonder if those who have not seen them can con-

ceive of how many of them there are, of how much Germany had been smashed and battered by the War, and of the magnitude of the task of rebuilding that confronts her?

Yet in between these frightful footprints of an army's advance there was loveliness and peace, once we left the main highways: small hamlets where the early roses were already blooming on the houses, where the rich, full woods and the lush grass, the cornfields that were already beginning to blush with ripeness, were all around, and soldiers were such a strange sight that everyone came to their doors to stare at us as we drove by.

A hundred miles beyond the Rhine we left the main axis of the advancing army and swung North-east, and now though the roads were wide they were empty. The advance was going so swiftly that everything had moved; only the large towns had military governments, with a few auxiliary troops attached to them to keep order; in between, the villages had seen the Army pass through and go on, and uniforms were so infrequent that they hardly knew if what they had seen was an illusion, and whether they had imagined the German retreat and the American advance. If there had been any response to the call from Berlin for the Werewolves to rise, then never would a better opportunity arise. The Allies' lines of communication were open; anyone, without fear of detection, could have mined the roads, or cut the cables, or overcome the sentries on the bridges, and overcome them before help could arrive. Instead, the German populace stared at us when we passed as if we were peace-time tourists, and treated us with the same hopeful deference when we stopped. It was not, in these areas, that they were afraid to sabotage our advance; it just didn't seem to occur to them. They did not seem interested. Is it that the man who owns and tills the land is a selfish man, interested, unless he is under compulsion, only in the soil beneath his feet and the crops it produces for himself and his family; saving his real

patriotism for his farm and what grows and lives upon it, and thinking if that is safe then why worry if there is peace or war, if old regimes fall or new ones rise?

Often enough, when we stopped at these farms to get eggs for our meals, we met fear and excitement, but it never had anything to do with events beyond the confines of the land upon which we were halted. It was, in fact, in every case the same story. This arable belt of Westphalia was rich in its land; for three years there had been ample labour to till its fields and tend its sleek cows, to gather the eggs and feed the pigs. To Westphalia had come thousand upon thousand of Polish and Russian imported labour, and, under the superintendence of their German masters, they had done their job well. Now the slave labour was working no longer; they too knew that the War was all but over, that the Germans were beaten, and they were making the most of it. In some farms Germans and foreign labour still worked amicably side by side, but they were rarities; in most farms the labour had risen up, stirred into action by men and women from other districts. These others came with their knapsacks filled with loot; they pushed barrows stuffed with stolen goods; some had motor-cars or horse-carts piled high with furniture and carpets. They told the others that the War was over, that there was no need to fear the Germans any longer; that they had been beaten decisively; that they were not allowed arms any longer, and that they could be imprisoned or even executed for molesting foreign workers. And so—well, if there was anything they fancied on the farm, some wine or some food, or some bright ornament in the parlour, now was the time to take it.

The complaints we met were so numerous that we got hardened to them, and unless it was a rape or a murder that was taking place, we shrugged our shoulders and went on. There was little we could do, anyway, and for all we knew the farmer had earned it.

That afternoon I drove our little pick-up van into Herford, today one of the main centres of the British zone of occupation in Germany; but that day an ominous and very lonely town. As we drove through the deserted streets in search of the Rathaus, the town-hall, we could hear shouts and singing from the buildings around us, and sometimes the crack of a rifle or a revolver. At an occasional corner, little groups of civilians broke and dispersed down the alley-ways as we rounded the bend; there was a watchful, furtive air about Herford that day. In the town square, a foreign girl worker was sprawled across the body of a man; there was a broken bottle and a puddle of spilt liquor beside them; and they were snoring stertorously.

We tramped the dark corridors of the Rathaus in search of the British Military Government offices, chasing the sound of voices through the gloom. Once we stumbled into the office of a group of Germans in police uniforms, gathered around a man in a trilby hat, spectacles perched upon his drawn yellow face. "It is too much, it is too much, after all we have gone through . . ." he kept saying in a plaintive voice, and they bobbed their heads in agreement. He saw us in the doorway, but took no notice until I broke in upon him; then without a word he jerked his hand down the corridor, and we went on.

Military Government was having a whisky and soda. Two majors and three captains, over half of the total British staff in the town, were mixing themselves a drink that I am sure they had richly earned that day, as we came through the door, and whisky being so scarce in Germany at that time that you wouldn't think of sharing it with any but your bosomest friends, we began to retire in some confusion. The whisky bottle went swiftly behind the desk and the glasses behind their backs, until they noticed that the battle-dress going out behind me was surmounted by a shock of feminine hair, and: "God bless my soul, an English-

woman!" said the Major. "I say, do come in and have a drink."

We had thought of staying the night in Herford, but in the next half-hour Military Government dissuaded us from that. They, it seemed, were sleeping in their offices at the moment, and couldn't offer us any billets. "And the rest of Herford is no place for an Englishwoman after dark," said the Major. Then added quickly, as if remembering that he was a travelled man: "Any women at all, for that matter."

Said one of the captains: "Talk about Sodom and Gomorrah. My, if the folks at home only knew what went on!"

For several days now, since before its capture by the American Ninth Army, and ever since the American troops had gone on past the town, Herford had been practically in the hands of the foreign workers. They had swarmed in from the farms around, loaded down with loot and drinks of every description; in great bands they had taken over most of the town's hotels and its best houses, throwing the proprietors into the streets and beating them when they protested; and for nearly a week now they had been on a grand liberation carousal.

"Didn't you hear them when you came in?" asked the Major. "They're usually caterwauling at all times of the day and night. They never seem to stop."

We admitted hearing some singing. I mentioned the revolver-shot I had heard, too.

"Perhaps," the Major said. "A bottle being opened, more like. Those D.P.'s have practically cleaned up a year's liquor in the past few days. They use it for food as well as drink. Then, when they get a bit short, they send a gang out into the town and they pick up the first citizen they find and make him take them home, so that they can ransack his house for more liquor. They're out on the prowl practically every night at the moment, and they do a lot of other things beside

stealing bottles and robbing the local safes. I suggest," he said, bowing gallantly to Gwenda, "that the sight of someone as attractive as you would come under the head of extreme provocation, and I strongly advise you to go anywhere else you like, but not, at any cost, to stay the night in this town. I have about ten men to keep order here, and they're being driven crazy enough with overwork, without having to bother about defending the honour of an Englishwoman. God bless my soul, what next!"

We resisted his blandishments to have another whisky and went down into the square again and started the engine. As we were about to drive away there was a noise in the back of the van and when we turned round to look, there were the man and the girl we had seen lying in the square; but now they were lying on our blankets, blissfully asleep inside our van. We grabbed them by the legs and pulled, and, after a few protests, they slithered out, foolishly grinning and slobbering great streams of Polish. We presumed that they were asking for cigarettes and gave them some, and then got back into the car.

They dropped where they stood, arm in arm, on the stone flags of the square, puffing away at our cigarettes. The streets were more deserted than ever, but there was still plenty of singing coming from the houses.

Those were the days when you were considered well-nigh pro-Nazi if you suggested that not every foreign worker in Germany was an ill-treated victim of the Gestapo. During the years of war, the German Reich imported over five million foreigners to work in her factories, her mines, and her fields and thus relieve Reich Germans for the armed forces, and it is surely disingenuous to believe that the whole five million of them were dragged across Europe against their will. In fact, investigations made by joint Allied Commissions since have divided "displaced persons" into three main

categories: first, those who were forced into Germany by threat and by pressure either from the German occupying authorities or by their own puppet governments; second, and by far the largest, those who went because of higher wages and better rations; and third, the avid and outright supporters of the Nazi regime. Great masses of foreign workers were discovered—Italians, Hungarians, Rumanians—who claimed the privileges and facilities of the “displaced person” simply by changing their nationality and asserting their allegiance to the Allied cause.

It was not the genuine “slave workers”, who had really suffered at the hands of the Nazis, who, in the main, were responsible for the reign of terror in Germany. I am not saying that they didn’t do some looting—they would have been saints if they had resisted the fever for it that ran through Germany—but the bloodshed and the terror was the work mainly, not of these victims of Nazism but of the lick-spittles who had fawned upon Hitler and his gang in the old days, and now, to cover up their treachery, were engaged on a campaign of violence. The genuine “slaves” just wanted to go home, and besieged the Military Government authorities to get them home as quickly as possible; the others showed no such anxiety to quit the Germany which, they claimed, had treated them so brutally. They were having a fine time. They could steal plenty of food and drink; no one interfered if they terrorised the local farmer and his daughters. The farmer was not allowed to protect himself adequately, in any case, on pain of execution, and if he protested his throat could always be slit, and those of his daughters, too.

So, in those early days, while the genuine “displaced persons” waited for transport or trekked along the roads towards home, thousands of less genuine “slaves” indulged in a bloody reign of terror. Military Government officials were helpless to stop it; they were understaffed and certainly not strong enough to cope with the mass violence going on;

and in any case their instructions were to leave the "slaves" unmolested, always to give them the benefit of the doubt over the Germans, to protect them from the Germans rather than the Germans from them. By the end of June, when I left Germany, there were nearly three-quarters of a million foreign workers in the British zone alone who, because of their attitude towards the Nazis, were strenuously anxious not to go back and face the judgment of their countrymen, and there was an equally huge number in the American zone. (In the Russian zone, one gathered, they were sent back whether they wanted to go or not). When I left Germany, the reign of terror was still going on, as this dispatch from Reuter's correspondent in Herford, dated June 28, will confirm.

"Gangs from displaced persons' camps are terrorising the countryside in British-occupied Germany. A British Military Government official said today that during the six weeks up to the middle of June there have been 100 murders, 60 cases of rape, 200 cases of robbery with violence, 150 thefts and slaughter of cattle, and about 1000 cases of looting.

"The problem is especially grave in the areas which British troops are evacuating to make room for American occupation troops. Taking full advantage of the interregnum the gangs leave the camps at night to do their work. The British Army is not allowed to put guards round the Russian and Polish displaced persons' camps, while German police, who are unarmed, are not allowed to take these persons into custody. Eight German policemen who were acting under Allied Military Government orders have been murdered.

"Nearly all the victims are unprotected German women. At Osnabrück a farmer's wife was assaulted and skewered to the floor of her house with a bayonet. The Military Government Major describing these gangs said: 'Many of them came to Germany of their own accord because they were

offered better rations. *At present there are about 600,000 displaced persons who have no intention of going back to their native lands.*' At Iserlohn the body of a German girl of eighteen was found who had had her throat cut in three places. The girl was bathing when she was seized and carried off to the woods."

From Herford on, the traffic began to thicken again, but it was the traffic of "displaced persons" rather than that of the Allied Armies. Great streams of cars, amateurishly plastered with Red Crosses and the letters "P.O.W." on the sides, stuffed with prisoners and with loot, poured along the roads, and there were horses and carts, lorries, and even traction-engines. Bands of foreign workers were moving from farm to farm, chickens stuck in their belts, swigging bottles of wine and schnapps, singing and dancing as they went. Once a German woman flagged us to a halt, and pointed to a pony trap from which the pony had disappeared, and an old man wrapped in blankets clinging to the slanting seat. He was weeping like a small child, but the woman was angry. "Those filthy swine have stolen our pony and left us here," she said. "My husband is an invalid and cannot walk. You must get us another horse."

We disclaimed responsibility for Germany's chaotic condition at that moment, but told her we would give her and her husband a lift to the next village. Between us, we lifted him aboard the van and laid him as gently as we could upon the sleeping bags. During the next twenty minutes the woman fumed against the foreign workers for their depredations, against the Nazis for having lost the War, and against the Allies for not having organised their conquest enough to protect the vanquished; while all the time, behind us, the husband sobbed in a small, childish voice. Then, when we helped them down at the next village, she nodded to us curtly, turned on her heel and began soliciting help from the curious villagers.

There was a largish town not far away, and as the sun was beginning to sink behind the rolling green hills we decided that we had better make for it and stay the night. Our first idea had been to stay at a farm, but it seemed that every farm at which we halted was already in possession of a party of displaced persons having a carousal, and what with the farmers beseeching us for aid and the "D.P.'s" drunkenly insisting that we join their celebrations, we came to the conclusion that we could be most tactful *in absentia*.

Yet, when we reached the neighbouring town, the prospects looked not much more inviting. That was the time when no one quite knew whether the Werewolf call would be heard or not and the population persuaded to rise, and it was disconcerting to drive so many miles along these roads, with pockets of Germans still known to be hiding well behind our forward lines, and see hardly an Allied soldier. Curfew in this area was at six p.m. and as we drove into the urban streets it had already been two hours in operation. The bombs had hit this town badly, and there were streets where every house had been hit; and this was more uncanny than Herford, for here there was no one to be seen at all; no sentries, even, no civilians with the arm-bands proclaiming them police, not even a "D.P." staggering around with a bottle. Only a few cats scratching about in the wreckage.

"Lord," said Gwenda, "this looks like being a really cheerful place to spend the night."

We found the headquarters of the Military Government, after half-an-hour of driving around vainly trying to find someone to ask. They had set up their administrative offices in an hotel off one of the main streets, but when we climbed down and went to the door we found it securely bolted against the approaching night. I hammered on the door, and after a time we heard the clump of military boots and the drawing of bolts. A head came round the opening door.

"*Was ist los?*" it said, and then, seeing we were English,

and fully opening the door: "What is it? What do you want?"

It was a sergeant, with the word "Poland" stitched across the top of his battle-dress arm.

We told him we wanted to see the Military Governor; we also suggested that he should let us in. He opened the door a little reluctantly, took a quick glance along the street, and then closed and bolted the door again behind us. Then he jerked his finger toward a room on the right.

"Major is in there," he said. "Having his dinner."

We knocked on the door and entered a small private dining-room. There was a major and a captain dining together, and they rose in astonishment at the sight of us.

"You can't stay here. This isn't a transit camp. We're absolutely full to the brim," the Major said.

"Thank you," I said, "but we'd like to find somewhere where we can stay, and as you're the Military Governor we thought you would know."

The Major was staring beyond me, at Gwenda.

"My God," he said. "You haven't brought a woman with you to a place like this?"

"Don't be ridiculous," Gwenda said. "What's wrong with this place?"

The Major shook his head. "Nothing," he said in grim tones. "Nothing. Except we've only got ten men to keep order in the town, and there isn't an army for miles. I'm sorry. We can't put you up. We're absolutely full up, not a room in the place, and we haven't any food, either."

All this time the Captain was standing behind the Major, smiling at us and looking at his chief, then shaking his head, as if we were not to take any notice of him.

I said: "Don't worry about food, we have plenty of rations. But surely you can suggest somewhere to stay?"

He thought for a moment, and then he brightened. "There's the Hotel Elisabeth. You can stay there. Just say

Military Government sent you. I'll send the Sergeant with you to show you where it is." He seemed eager to see us go, for he rushed to the door and called the Sergeant, and told him to escort us across to the Hotel Elisabeth. At once there was a fierce altercation. I could hear the Sergeant refusing to go, and the Major trying to coax him.

"It isn't right that I should be sent out," the Sergeant kept complaining. "It isn't fair." And then finally: "All right, but someone must go with me. I don't want to have to come back all by myself."

It was such an incredible conversation that Gwenda whispered to the Captain: "Good heavens, is this place really as dangerous as all that?"

The Captain shook his head. "We're all a bit overworked, you know, and nervous. Don't you take any notice. It's just that we don't trust these Germans. The Major had been to this place before the War, and he says they're a treacherous lot and we aren't to co-operate with them, so things get out of hand now and then, and we don't get much news about what's going on. Tell me, where are the Allied armies?"

We told him.

"Christ," he said, "as far as that?" Then: "Sorry; the radio's broken down and none of us ten can mend it, and all we've heard is a rumour that the Germans are on their way back here. That's why we're a bit edgy."

"But, my dear fellow," I said, "the nearest German army is fifty miles away."

The Captain rushed to the door and called the Major. "D'you hear that? This correspondent says the nearest German army is fifty miles away."

The Major brightened, looked thoughtfully at Gwenda for a moment, and then said:

"Look here. You go off to the Hotel Elisabeth and see what it looks like. If you don't like it, then come back here and we'll try and find somewhere to put you up. Sorry I was

so abrupt, but there are only ten of us and you can't tell what these Germans are going to do next."

The Sergeant had reappeared now with a companion carrying a tommy-gun and we set off. The second soldier, who came from Stalybridge, seemed quite at ease, but every time we passed a corner the Sergeant would shrink into the shadow and put his hand on his revolver.

In view of his precautions I asked if they got sniping in the town after curfew.

"Not so far," said the Lancashire man, "but the Major and Sarge here are always talking about it."

The Sergeant turned round and exploded into violent speech. "It is all very well for you to talk," he said. "You do not speak the language like I do. You do not know these Germans and what they can do. I am a Pole, and I know. I know what they did to my people in Poland. And I know their language and know what they are thinking and plotting. You trust them too much—and one day, because of it, you will get a shot in your back."

We crossed a square, turned another street, and came up to a building. The roof had been blown off by bombs, and only two of the walls were standing, but the sign across the front, HOTEL ELISABETH, was still legible when you looked carefully.

"I think," said Gwenda firmly, "we will accept the Major's offer and get him to squeeze us into his hotel, somehow. How many rooms are there in your hotel?"

"Sixty-eight, Miss," said the Lancashire man.

"All undamaged?"

"Practically, Miss."

"And how many," asked Gwenda, "are there of you?"

"Ten," said the Lancashire man.

The Pole exploded again. "It is terrible. Only ten men to keep order among all these Germans. It is outrageous. The Allies must be mad."

“Sergeant,” interjected Gwenda sharply, “for God’s sake put that gun of yours away and stop playing at cowboys and Indians. Let’s get back to the hotel and get the Major to give us a room. I’m hungry.”

“If you’ve got some rations, one of our lads will cook them for you, I know,” the Lancashire man said. “And maybe you’ll join us afterwards. We’ve got some beer and champagne and brandy. Maybe you could tell us the news; how the War’s going, like.”

CHAPTER FOUR

I HASTEN TO SAY that not all Military Governments we visited in Germany acted like that; in fact, I do not recall another which displayed quite such lamentable lack of grip. The bad were far outnumbered by those superlatively good ones which did exceptional, almost miraculous, work in the frightful task of getting shattered cities and shattered citizens back to some semblance of normality. Whoever drew up the Establishments of Military Government staffs at Supreme Headquarters should have his head examined, for the appallingly small amount of men allotted for missions of such magnitude is criminal. Quite often, too, members of those staffs were completely unfitted for their jobs, knowing nothing about Germany and its social, historic and cultural background, speaking nothing of the language, full of preconceived ideas and prejudices, and as often too old and set ever to change them. I know that prior claims by operational branches of the Army for experts on Germany skimmed the cream of the choice, but the selection boards were obviously not continuously vigilant in choosing the best of what was left.

Those hectic days in April, with the War ending, foreign workers rioting, rumours of German counter-attacks filtering through the countryside, made that period a testing-time for all Military Government staffs. With the armies so far away that they could not possibly be called in time, they had to face all emergencies without the threat of arms; they had to use tact, thought, humanity, and—if they were to succeed—the co-operation of others to preserve order. Some Military Governments broke down under the strain; the majority did not, though in some places the magnitude of the task seemed at times insurmountable. In this chapter I

want to tell the story of perhaps the most complicated and seemingly insoluble of all the problems that confronted Allied Military Government in Germany, and of how a belief in the fundamental decencies of all peoples, no matter what their race or creed, solved it.

For the past two days we had been pottering along from village to village, knocking at cottages and farmhouses when we wanted a meal or a place for the night, and absorbing rather than seeking out the mad and changing scene that was Occupied Germany that April. But now we were on the autobahn again and going East, part of a great string of lorries and staff cars that were pressing forward towards the goal at the end of this great ribbon of concrete—Berlin, two hundred miles away. Then at Hanover we turned off.

The sun and the blue sky were blotted out that morning by heavy clouds and gusts of rain, and as we swung out of the traffic and bumped over a rutted cart-track and narrow bridge across the river and the canal (the main bridges had been blown by the retreating Germans) Hanover looked a more sullen and desolate city than any I have ever seen. Even from there, five miles away, the devastation of the bombing was appalling. From our little elevation we were looking down upon it, and it was horrible; we could swing our eyes over the whole panorama and see not a single undamaged roof. Hanover looked like a wound in the earth rather than a city. As we came nearer, I looked for the familiar signs that I used to know, but the transformation that had been made by bombardment seemed complete; I could not recognise anywhere; whole streets had disappeared, and squares and gardens and brooks with them, covered over in piles of brick and stone and mortar. Several times, in the narrow path the bulldozers had cleared to the centre of the city, there was a signpost still hanging with a

street-name on it; I followed it because I knew that it would lead me to the Rathaus, but there was nothing else to indicate that I was driving over ground I had touched before.

And yet, when we made a final twisting turn, suddenly there were landmarks before me again. There was the railway station, battered and bruised, yet nonetheless recognisable; and away in the opposite direction, above a silhouette of crumbled walls, there was the great green dome of the Rathaus itself: two familiar buildings, and yet so changed in their setting that they might have been transplanted to new surroundings.

All through these ruined streets we had seen people. The streets were crowded with them, so much so that we had to hoot our way through. Some carried baskets over their arms from which rolls of bread were sticking, others carried chairs or tables on their backs, while still others wheeled barrows piled with household goods.

As we drew nearer to the Rathaus the crowds increased in numbers, until, outside the building itself, there must have been two thousand of them. Not a restive crowd, nor, as far as we could see, an apathetic one, but a patient, rather good-humoured crowd, waiting to gain access to the town-hall; young girls and women, middle-aged and elderly men, several scores of young Germans in Wehrmacht uniform, and almost as many small children. They were being let through the doors, a few at a time, by tall Dutch policemen in imposing black uniforms. All around them, gesticulating and shouting, bustled foreign workers—French, Dutch, Poles, Russians, Greeks—and pushing their way through both came grimy, bearded men in British and Dominion uniforms—released British prisoners-of-war who were coming in from camps overrun by our Armies, in a constant stream of looted German civilian cars.

We did not need to be told that this was the headquarters of Military Government for Hanover; but as we climbed the

stairs we had no inkling of the problem that this Military Government was facing.

The Military Governor, Major G. H. Lamb, was glad to see us. This was a purely American area, under the operational command of the American First Army, and he seemed tremendously pleased to see an English uniform; he took us into his office and we asked him to tell us something about what was happening in Hanover, and he ended by inviting us to lunch at the mess he and his staff had set up on the outskirts of the city. "It's six miles away from the Rathaus," the Major said, "and that's a damned long way when you're wanted in a hurry, but it's the only place where we could find accommodation. The city's just a ruin, hardly a building standing. Out there we found a street of quite good middle-class houses, absolutely untouched. Hot water and everything. Now let me get this work finished, and I'll tell you what's happening in Hanover over lunch."

During the next half-hour, as they came into the office on some mission or other, we were introduced to the eight members of the Major's staff. They were all much younger than he was. I should have put his age at fifty-five. His hair was white, and underneath it was one of those faces one so often sees on country vicars of the better sort: ruddy from good health, lined with good humour, eyes bright and understanding. Plainly his staff thought of him that way, too; when they called him "Sir" and asked him for instructions, it was the deference of respect rather than to his rank that seemed to colour their voices. He dealt with them swiftly, with mild calm; the nearest he came to a rebuke was when he said: "Don't bring that sort of action for my approval, Jack. Use your judgment, but get the thing done; if it turns out badly, then we'll have to straighten it out. But don't ask me about it. Ask some of these German officials. They should know. That's what they're here for."

Yet, as we soon saw, he could be firm and forthright and capable enough. We were driving with him to his suburban mess, through a street of half-wrecked factories, when the car was halted by a great crowd swarming over the street. Scores of fights were going on; men and women were rolling in the gutters, tearing at each other's hair, and at the packages they clutched to their bosoms. The Major didn't even seem surprised to see it.

"This is the sort of thing that goes on all day," he said, as if it were a procession instead of a riot. "Looting, fighting, rape, murder—what a town!"

He brought the car to a halt, got out and took his revolver from its holster. He fired two quick shots in the air. The effect was immediate; the roar of the crowd died away, the fighting ceased, stolen packages were dropped to the ground. Four or five hundred ugly-looking slave workers and Germans, half of them drunk from stolen wine, turned and looked at him.

The Major waved his revolver and drew in a deep breath. Then in a terrific roar from such a mild and modestly built man: "*Raus!* Go on there—*raus!*" he shouted, "the whole lot of you, before I start firing lower!"

There was another silence. Then grins began to appear on the grimy faces of the crowd. They nodded their heads, saluted the Major or touched their caps, helped people to their feet whom they had been kicking a few moments ago, and quietly and quickly they dispersed.

The Major did the same thing, with the same effect, four more times before we reached our destination. Looters were ranging the city, and the fever was running high. We watched great crowds breaking down the doors of food stores, of shops and warehouses, anything that might contain stealable goods. Someone once told me that when the looting fever is in a man he will kill or maim to get something, even if that "something" isn't worth stealing, and Hanover

confirmed it. We saw one crowd on that short journey which had just broken into a storehouse; there were Germans as well as foreign workers among the milling mass of screaming people; they burst through doors and windows and then came out, their arms full—of door knobs! It was a store for door knobs, and what these people could want with such objects, in a city where half the doors no longer existed, is beyond me; yet they not only looted those door knobs, but they fought over them. They kicked and scratched and beat with iron bars those who had more door knobs than themselves. I saw one foreign worker trip up a girl, tear the door knobs from her arms, and then kick her repeatedly in the face and body until she was covered with blood. Then he raced off down the street. Halfway down, he seemed to come to his senses; he looked down at the objects he was carrying, and then with a visible gesture of distaste he flung them all away. A German woman was watching him, and as soon as he had gone she ran down the street to retrieve what he had thrown away, followed by several others screaming imprecations at her.

The Major might have been watching a match at Lords. Such scenes seemed neither to surprise nor perturb him. He scattered the crowds with an efficiency that astounded us.

"What a lot they are!" he said. "Just like bad children. This sort of thing brings out the worst in people, doesn't it? Let things get a little out of hand for a bit, and it's astounding what people will do—steal, kill, anything. Did you see that man kicking that woman? Outrageous action; and he looked quite a respectable sort of fellow. That shows what war can do, what emotions it can let loose."

Gwenda looked at me and I looked at her. We were beginning to like Major Lamb; and when, after lunch that day, he suggested that we stay for a few days and watch a military government at work, we accepted his invitation.

When Major Lamb drove to the front steps of Hanover Rathaus, on the morning of April 10, a battle was still going on for the possession of the city. American First Army troops were mopping up the last Nazi resistance in the honeycomb of wrecked houses and shelters a few hundred yards away, and bullets were whistling uncomfortably close to him as he marched through the main door and assumed the job of Military Governor of this huge city. By nightfall the mopping-up was done, and save for a few non-combat units, the American First Army went on its way, leaving the Major, his staff of six British and two Canadian officers, and two hundred men to keep order. It was rather like asking someone to keep a volcano down with a water pistol.

The military authorities knew before we went into Hanover that it was pretty badly damaged by bombs, but no one had bothered to tell the Major exactly how much. He imagined that he would drive in to find hotels going, and public services, and that there would be a skeleton staff of officials left in the city to help in the restoration of public order. He had been led to believe, also, that Hanover had been largely evacuated of its population by the Nazis, and that, at least for some weeks, the problem of feeding a vast population would not have to be solved. The facts were therefore disconcerting.

The Major and his staff arrived at the Rathaus to find that it was one of the few buildings in Hanover with a roof on, and even that roof had gaping holes in it. In the centre area of the city seventy-five per cent. of all the buildings had been completely destroyed by bombs. You could walk for miles without seeing a building left with a wall higher than your thigh. Electricity had been cut; the water supply wasn't working; there were no sewers. The city was a gigantic open sore—and crawling about in that sore were not a few thousand, or even a few scores of thousands of people, but a vast population of peoples of all lands and tongues and

temperaments. Hanover had some seven hundred thousand inhabitants before the War. Thousands had gone, thousands more had been killed in the raids (28,000 in the last raid). But it has since been discovered that, on the day Major Lamb and his staff took over, there were over half a million people still there: 250,000 Germans, 100,000 foreign workers, and over 50,000 released British and Allied prisoners-of-war. They inhabited the ruins of this once prosperous city, and no Wild West town of the last century could compare with the lawlessness of the life they lived. It was a town of drunkenness and murder. The first places the foreign workers had made for as the German army fled were the liquor stores; they battered down the doors and emerged with cases of schnapps and brandy and wine. They sat in the doorways, breaking off the bottle-necks of Hennessy and Martell and guzzling it down. When they had no liquor they drank bottle after bottle of fine French wines, and hock and Mosel. When they got hungry they broke into food stores. When the city police tried to protect these places, they fell upon them and hung their bodies from the lamp-posts and went off with their arms. They stormed dumps of every kind. By the night of April 10 thousands of them were drunk, and thousands of them were marauding the city with guns and knives, on the search for loot or for women. There were fires burning everywhere, and mad screams and shouts coming from every street. Wild shots whistled by from the guns of the drunken foreign slaves, and much more dangerous ones from the Nazi snipers still concealed in some of the ruins.

The Major will never forget that night. "There was so much happening and so little we could do," he said. "We had only a handful of men, and naturally their job was to protect the town from the Germans rather than the Germans from the slaves. They had to look out for snipers, and for hidden pockets of enemy troops; they couldn't stop to

protect German men and women from being murdered. We did our best with what we could find of the city police staff. My two public safety lieutenants took them in hand, and tried to restore order as best they could."

The Major's two public-safety lieutenants both come from Cambridgeshire, Lieutenant C. F. Hall, from Wisbech, and Lieutenant Winterburn, from Cambridge itself. For two young (both were around thirty) police officers, who, before they went to Germany, dealt mainly in motor accidents and rowdy students, they rose to the situation well. They worked all afternoon and all that evening, questioning the policemen and probing their records; then they equipped those of whom they approved with truncheons, and told them to go out and try to restore order. They found a whole squad of Dutch policemen from The Hague, imported by the Germans to keep order during bombing raids, and they gave them arms, setting some of them on guard around the Rathaus. Released British and French prisoners-of-war were pouring into the Rathaus, so they asked for volunteers among them, gave them guns, and sent them out to patrol the city in the cars they had looted.

"It was a makeshift job, but you can't build up a police-force in an afternoon and expect it to be perfect," Winterburn said. "But at least, that first night, it restored some sort of vague order to the city. It didn't stop the rapes and the murders, but it stopped the large-scale looting of the food and materials we were going to need once we got this city back on its feet."

Meanwhile, Lamb and the rest of his staff were working desperately hard to get some sort of a city government into being. There were several names on a list the Major carried of government officials with anti-Nazi records who might be willing to help in the job of restoration—if they were still alive. All night they searched for the men they wanted, or sent out Germans to bring them in. The electricity works' manager, the gas and waterworks' managers, the

managers of the transport and fire and fuel and sanitation departments were all brought in. One of the Canadian officers had found a house in the suburbs where they could live, and had established a mess, but no one had time to go near it yet. Everyone was in conference, making plans.

At the end of thirty-six hours, a tired but satisfied Major Lamb and his staff of eight men had taken the first step towards the ending of chaos. They had appointed an Ober-burgomeister, and they had a feeling he was going to be a good one. His record was impressive. He had been Burgo-master of Hanover before, as a Social Democrat before the coming of the Nazis; he had a long record, as Social Democrat and then as a Socialist; and British prisoners-of-war and Allied agents working inside Germany were able to confirm that he had been, during five years of war, an active member of a German underground movement, some thousand strong, which had not only spread anti-Nazi news through the whole of the province, but had sabotaged the German war effort and helped escaped Allied prisoners and fugitives from the Gestapo. It was a good start.

"I had a long talk to the burgomaster, and it wasn't only his record that impressed me," said Lamb. "I liked him. I liked the look and the sound of him. If he'd been an Englishman I'd have trusted him anywhere. If there are good Germans, then he must be one. So I told him that he was Mayor of the city, under my supervision, and that he could appoint what staff he thought fit to get the place back under control. He would have a free hand, I said. He was very moved when I told him that. He held out his hand to shake mine by way of thanks. That was one of the times—there were others later—when the rule that you can't shake hands with Germans was awkward. I had to invent something to keep my arm busy until he put his down."

I hope I am giving a picture in all this of Major Lamb as he was: sometimes a naïve man, with many of the pre-

judices that English people have about foreigners, and yet withal an honest man and one shrewd enough, when an emergency came, to throw over cant and hypocrisy and to cut through red tape to get to his goal.

I don't want you to think that all these consultations were going on in a spirit of easy friendliness. The knowledge that this city had been a battleground only a few hours before hung over the conference-rooms; Germans and British alike were conscious of it. The British were armed and in uniform, and they were peremptory in their questions and their orders; they were such a puny force that any other attitude might have been fatal. The Germans were meek and acquiescent, but watchful too. When it came to the conferences with the technical officials of the city, the situation was often strained. Unlike the burgomaster, these were not democrats with underground records, willing and eager to help. These were officials, many of whom had been members of the Party; they were humiliated and ashamed in their defeat, and they showed it. Pride stood between them and the hard, practical Canadian engineer whose job it was to get the city running again. He spoke no German, and he wasted no words upon them.

"This city is in a mess," he said. "No water, no light, no power, no sewage. We want them all working again. You," he said to the waterworks' engineer, "you will have water flowing for public consumption, and quickly, do you hear?"

The water engineer bowed and said nothing.

"You," to the electricity man, "will have light for us, and if it isn't going anywhere else I want light inside this city hall. Understand?"

Another bow.

"And you. You will have gas for the cookers again—one hour a day. If you want transport to bring in fuel, let me know. I'll authorise you to requisition. And you will get those sewers mended before we all die of dysentery."

They bowed and withdrew, stiff, defeated and racked with hurt pride. They stumped over to the Oberburgomeister and protested at the way they had been treated. "They talk to us like criminals," they said. "They do not even give us the respect of our positions. We will not help them."

The Burgomaster thumped the table. "Help them?" he roared. "You fools, it is not them you are helping. It is us—we Germans, you and me and thousands of our people. This Military Government has come into Hanover to get order back to this city—for their own reasons, yes. They do not want to have disturbances in the rear of their Armies, and it is for that reason they wish to restore order. But are we to refuse to help them because of that? Haven't we suffered enough from war? Haven't we suffered enough from bombing, and Nazi bullying and persecution? If we do not co-operate, who will suffer? Not the Allies. They are winning the War, and it is only a matter of days now before it is over. If we do not show willingness now, they will say we are hopeless and let us rot. They will not care then if we have water and light and power and sanitation. These men of the Military Government are human and understanding. They resent us, of course. We are their enemies. They blame us for the War. But they are just and humane too. This is no time to bridle at their harsh words, but to pay attention to their deeds. This is the time to work, to help them to give back decency to our people. Now go—and do what the Military Government tells you. Show them that though you are Germans you are humane, too. And still capable, efficient men."

The Burgomaster made several speeches like that, some of which, for we were taking no chances, were listened-in upon by American and British agents. He went among the people of his city, telling them to forget war and National Socialism and all the propaganda they had heard about the enemy, and to co-operate willingly and with all their power to

restore Hanover. "Show them that we believe in civilisation. Show them that not all Germans are brutes and beasts," he said.

He had gone down himself to a concentration camp for Jews which had been found on the outskirts of the city, where men and women and children were dying of dysentery and starvation, and he led a gang of his own citizens in digging decent graves for the dead and washing, cleaning and helping the rest. He was everywhere, rallying the people, appealing to them to forget the past. By the time I arrived in the city a new spirit was rising in Hanover. The last snipers had been rounded up. The walls were beginning to flower with anti-Hitler slogans. And life was coming back, decent, normal life.

Electricity, for instance, was on again. The Canadian engineer had ordered that it was to be ready in a week. The electricity manager entered his office two days before the week was up, pressed the switch, and the light went on. Water power had been restored; he had ordered it in eight days, but it was going in six. It began like that, with pride spurring on the German technicians, a bitter determination to do everything better and more quickly than they were ordered. We asked that something be ready in twenty-four hours, and eighteen hours later it was ready; we cut down the time for something else to twelve hours and it was ready in six.

But, as light came on, and cooking facilities, and the first terrors faded, tempers eased and orders were not so peremptory; and you could feel the atmosphere subtly changing. Changing on both sides. It is hard to keep back admiration for efficiency, even when you are anti-German. As an engineer, the Canadian who gave the orders had more in common, really, with the men who carried them out than with his own colleagues in the Military Government; once they got to know each other, differences in spoken

language didn't matter; they had the same language of machinery and output and production. It was impossible for him not to be interested, personally as well as officially, in what they did; and they, too, hung upon the new methods and ideas he brought to them from the new world.

I won't say that suspicion had gone, nor much of the resentment, but after a week of British Military Government in Hanover you walked inside the Rathaus in the centre of the city and you got the impression, as in no other city I visited in the same period, of an organisation that was running smoothly and well.

We went from department to department, sitting for hours in obscure corners and watching these nine men at work; and often enough there were arguments and scenes and outbursts of anger. These men were overwhelmingly overworked. The strain was frightful, and naturally there were flare-ups.

I suppose the most difficult job of all was that one placed in the hands of the supply officer, Major Fink. He had to see that half a million people were fed; fed from food stores which were daily being looted of their scanty stocks. He had to arrange distribution and transport, reorganise the German ration system to meet the local food situation, protect food-producing factories and the men who brought the food to the town. He had to get a whole production system, destroyed by war, working again. And, though the German civilians were co-operating, there were many others who were not. The foreign workers, a week after the capture of Hanover, were still celebrating the liberation; still staging wild orgies, still looting and killing and raping. The two public-safety officers were coping manfully with an avalanche of problems; to be in their office was a revelation of the chaos and anarchy of that city still. Every few moments people were coming in: wounded, blood-stained German policemen who had been manhandled by the crowds, their

truncheons whipped away from them; frantic citizens come to implore help against attacks upon their houses, or their wives and sisters. It was an unforgettable scene: those two tall, imperturbable, kindly young men from Cambridgeshire dealing with the hysterical mob around them.

"You must come, please, quickly. It is my wife. A mob broke in and attacked her, and——"

Winterburn would break in. "Is she dead?"

"Yes. It is terrible. You must——"

Winterburn to the interpreter:—"Give him our sympathy and tell him to go to the civil government. We only have time for living people here."

Another: "Please. It is my daughter. Two drunken men—they have dragged her down the street, and she is screaming for help but no one comes. Please come."

Winterburn would get to his feet, strap on his gun, and call to one of the volunteers from among the released British prisoners-of-war.

"Come on, we'll go and deal with that ourselves. Now you keep calm, Dad, and show us the way. Everything will be all right."

That went on all day; complaints about murders, thefts, riots all the time; and all the time, too, ironically side by side with it, an unending stream of indignant Germans come to complain that their bicycles had been stolen! Major Lamb gave his two lieutenants a free hand and they used it well. Sometimes, in the middle of that reign of crime and terror, they would lean back in their chairs and say: "Can you imagine us back in Cambridge after the War, trying to look grave with someone for having no rear light?"

With the help of the Burgomaster, they had got together a sizeable German civilian police-force, all of whose members were unstained by Nazi records. They were men of courage; they needed to be, for they were allowed neither uniforms nor arms; only a white arm-band with "M.G. Polizei" written

across it. Against drunken or embittered foreign looters they had a truncheon, with which they were expected to break up demonstrations and riots. It needed stout hearts for those men to go in among frenzied crowds, most of whom were armed. To back them, British, French and Dutch prisoners-of-war were lending an increasing hand; they formed mobile patrols which answered alarm calls; they brought in suspected French, Dutch, Polish and German S.S. troops, spies and rioters for questioning. They helped to police the local gaols. They were not gentle with the men they brought in, no matter what their nationality, but they were uncanny in their detection, and their severity was reserved only for those they fully believed guilty. To the run-of-the-mill German civilian they were, like all other prisoners-of-war I met in Germany, polite and considerate; in fact, all over Hanover's outskirts British prisoners, while awaiting transportation home, had gone to live on German farms to protect them from the depredations of the loot-hungry, women-hungry slave labour.

But in spite of all this, the problem was too much. No scratch police-force of this kind could keep order among over 100,000 foreign slaves who were tasting their first real freedom for years. And while the wildness went on, Hanover's vital food supplies were threatened, and starvation faced the whole populace. It was vital that, for that reason alone, the lawlessness in Hanover should be stopped.

Major Lamb called in Captain S. F. English, who was in charge of foreign workers' affairs, and told him to find the solution. English was a nervous, highly-strung man of middle age whose wife and children had been caught in France by the Nazis in 1940; he did not love the Germans and I don't think I would be wrong to describe him as being one of that school which would welcome their total extermination; yet such was the spirit of that small band of Britons, such was the influence of the Major who led them,

that he was scrupulously fair and just. With the foreign workers he was in his element; he spoke several languages, was high-strung and given to fits of tremendous enthusiasm, and he never ceased working. His solution was to form what he himself called a League of Nations Committee. He went to each community of foreign workers and asked them to choose a committee to represent them, and for each of these committees to choose a delegate to consult with him. After two or three days French, Polish, Czech, Belgian, Dutch and Russian committees were all in operation. They were established in offices in bombed-out buildings, given requisitioned cars and office staffs, and henceforth all foreign inquirers were sent to the office of their committee for information.

It was that League of Nations which ended the reign of terror in Hanover. English told the delegates that, henceforth, it was up to them to keep their communities in order. They must be kept in camps, and prevented from roaming the country in search of loot; they must give up their arms. They must discipline their recalcitrants. It didn't happen with miraculous swiftness. For many days afterwards, bands still pillaged the city; there were still queues of Germans coming into the Rathaus to report murders and thefts and assaults. But, put upon their own responsibility, the foreign workers seemed to come to their senses; among the French and the Russians particularly there was order and discipline again.

Hanover, ten days after its capture, was hardly a city to which you would have taken your maiden aunt. After darkness it was a dark, fearsome, dangerous place, where you faced death or attack at every corner; a place of menace, of mysterious bangs and explosions, of furtive figures among the bomb ruins. Life, if not so lawless as before, was still rough and lusty. The drabs and the slatterns, German and foreign alike, were still doing a roaring trade in the noisome

alleys. But there was safety and some semblance of normality again for the citizens; the curfew, which had kept Germans in for all but three hours a day, was lifted until sunset. The shops began to open, as supplies began to come in; new ration cards began to be distributed; factories began to operate again; a skeleton transport service began to function.

Under the aegis of Major Lamb, an unsophisticated Englishman who believed "in treating people as you find them", British, Germans and foreigners had worked and were working together, and had brought sanity back to a place of madness. They had started by hating and suspecting each other and ended by feeling a mutual respect that will, I hope, ripen into friendship when the rules of life in Germany are saner. It is an achievement that deserves recognition, for at the outset it would have seemed impossible to most men. Hanover, in those first few weeks of occupation, was Europe's problem in miniature: wild, lawless, full of fears and resentments, at the mercy of the tyrants. Good humour, good will, and the co-operation of all men, of all races and religions—Catholics, Jews (one of the key men on Lamb's staff was a Jew from Liverpool), and Protestants—brought peace to Hanover, and good hope for the future.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHEN YOU WANT accommodation in the British or American zones of Occupied Germany there is no question of taking rooms with a German family. The rule is strict. You do not share a house with a German; you give him immediate notice to quit, and you take over completely from him, furniture and everything else, except "personal belongings". Exactly what "personal belongings" means is left to the discretion of the commanding officer of the particular unit which requisitions a house; it usually includes sheets and carpets, and what knick-nacks can be carried off by hand—and always provided enough time is given to remove them—but, in my experience, it rarely included the contents of the cellar, or the radio, or such essentials as coal and kitchen utensils. (But that depended on what the requisitioning officer thought of the Germans, what sort of a mood he was in, and what sort of a house it was.)

It was a rule laid down by military necessity, and one could understand the reasons for it. A military unit, no matter what its nationality, can hardly be expected to work or live with enemy subjects constantly around their quarters. But when, as in our case, there were only two people to be considered it is a harsh and embarrassing rule to have to obey, particularly if one is interested in talking to the German people. Rather than push a whole German family on to the street (for, with so many millions of Allied troops needing so many billets, there were not many friends to whom the homeless Germans could go) we deliberately disobeyed the rule and let the family stay. We preferred it that way, particularly since they cooked our food and did our laundry; and they in turn seemed to be delighted—they knew

their home was safe from marauding "D.P.'s". But during our stay in Hanover, as guests of Major Lamb, we could not very well follow our rule. When he told us he would requisition a house for us we protested that we did not need a whole house. But how could he, a Military Governor, under SHAEF's watchful eye, disobey the law? It was a whole house, or nothing. Reluctantly I went down the street with the requisitioning officer, to Number 24. It was a street of modest houses which had, miraculously, escaped all the bombings of Hanover; its inhabitants seemed to be artisans and clerks from the city. They were typical German working-class houses of the modern type, with admirably compact kitchens, cellars, storage closets, and central heating; and Number 24 seemed to be inhabited, from the children playing around the door, by a largish family. The Canadian officer who had come to do the requisitioning looked at them with that expression on his face that denotes a passion for children, and you could see that he wasn't looking forward to his task of throwing them out of their home. I might have made him feel better by telling him that the song they were singing as they played with their ball was about the antecedents of Roosevelt and Churchill and the piggish qualities of the British people, but they so obviously didn't connect the words of the song with these strange newcomers in uniform that I thought it would be hardly fair; and we went up to the door and rang the bell. The daughter of the house answered it, a not unattractive blonde of seventeen or eighteen.

The Captain swallowed. "You speak English?"

"A little," she said. "Please?"

"It is now two o'clock," he said, looking at his watch. "You will leave your house by three o'clock, for this officer."

"Please?" she said. And then: "*Ach Gott, was ist—Mama! Mama!*" as she vanished into the house.

The Canadian looked uncomfortable. "Can't afford to

give them more than an hour," he said. "Gives them too much time. They take everything. You got a radio?"

I nodded.

"Guess we'll let them take their radio, then. Sheets?" I nodded. "Okay, let them take their sheets. But nothing else. Wonder if they've got any wine?" He braced himself against the arrival of the mother of the house, who was coming down the corridor. He need not have bothered. She listened to him repeating his order, and without hesitation she nodded. She did not even look surprised or distressed; it was as if she had expected it. And at three-fifteen that afternoon, when we entered that little house, she had gone, and carpets, glassware and several other things had gone with her; but the children were still outside, watching us with stony stares as we went through the door of their home, and the tear-stained face of the daughter of the house was watching us from the window next door. Then, for the first time, they saw Gwenda was with me. The tearful face wore a startled look as it hurriedly withdrew; then the mother's face came, and it wreathed in smiles as Gwenda went into the house as well. Even the children began to play again, singing their anti-British song as they bounced their ball; as if all of them suddenly realised that, with a woman there, their home was safe.

After that, while we stayed in Hanover, we came to an arrangement with the family we had usurped. Sur-reptitiously, of course. There was a way into the house through the garden that was not overlooked by the British soldiers in the area, and by that way we allowed the mother and daughter to come into the house and use the kitchen for meals and the cellars for washing and repairing. Gwenda used to talk to them as they peeled the potatoes for their day's meal, but it was hard, in this case, to converse on a normal plane. Not perhaps unnaturally, the family did not seem able to forget that we were in possession of their home and

could do with it—treat it, take from it—as we willed. The knowledge of it was always in the air, and often the resentment faintly, carefully repressed. I overheard the mother thanking Gwenda one day for allowing her to come back into the house now and then.

“The neighbours are very kind,” she said, “but it’s not the same as being in your own home.”

It was not the most tactful remark to have made, and perhaps it was spoken deliberately. We felt, rather ruefully, that an Englishwoman would have used exactly the same words; in any case, we already felt uncomfortable. There was little we could do about it, in the circumstances; but we resolved that, no matter what the conditions in future, we would never throw another German family out of its home just to get rooms in which to sleep for the night.

The Canadian captain had been round to have a drink with us several times while we were in the house, and had naturally not neglected to examine the contents. During one of those visits he had admired the stove. The day we left Hanover a squad of British soldiers came into the house, tore the stove from its moorings, and carted it out on to the pavement.

The family was watching from next door, and came flying out to protest. When they saw me, streams of passionate pleadings were flung at my head. I questioned the men, and it was as I thought: the stove in the officers’ mess had gone wrong, and this one was being taken to replace it. It was the sort of thing that happened all over Germany now, hundreds of times a day.

The mother wrung her hands. But what would she do for cooking when she went back into the house?

A Dutch sergeant who was helping the squad put the situation to her then with brutal simplicity.

“*Meine Frau*,” he said, “you will not be going back to your house for a long time. It has been requisitioned. It is

not your house any longer—not even when these officers go. You will not need to worry about your stove for a long time. You will not have a house to put one in.”

Her face clouded. Behind her the children began to cry. She was about to cry herself, and then she shook her head as if to throw back the approaching tears. Ostentatiously she turned her back to the soldiers.

“Good-bye,” she said to us. “I hope you have enjoyed your stay in Hanover.”

No, we decided, we would never throw out a German family again. Even when you looked at it selfishly, it was altogether too trying on the nerves.

That part of the Army which deals with the needs of war correspondents had established itself in a little village some seven or eight miles from Second Army Headquarters. We went to rejoin them to send off messages and letters, and to replenish our store of rations. We hoped to be there only a few days, but it turned out to be more than that.

Oeylerberg was one of those small German villages, tucked away in a Hanover vale, that, because of a mineral spring in the neighbourhood, calls itself a spa. Someone had built an hotel there, to which German sportsmen came before the War for open-air holidays and shooting; then, when bombs began to blanket the Ruhr, the Government requisitioned it for German evacuees. Now these in turn had been removed to make way for the officers and staff of the British Army's publicity organisation. In the lovely warm sunshine with which we were once more blessed it was an idyllic place to be in; there were soldiers around, of course, and always in the distance you could hear the rattle of passing tanks and the banging of the guns; and yet you still felt that you were away from war for a little.

The villagers themselves were peasants. Their main occupation was working for the great trout hatchery which

had been constructed at the foot of the steep wooded hillock upon which the hotel stood. When our troops first entered the village, British soldiers had spotted the trout, made for the pool containing the biggest, and flung a hand grenade in it, thereby breaking open the pool and killing the whole lot. That night the villagers crept to the remaining pools with jars and buckets and filled them with as many of the surviving trout as they could gather; and every cottage parlour now had its bowl of trout, carefully watched over by their owners as they grew to maturity.

The Burgomaster of this tiny village was an elderly peasant farmer who lived in an old, red-brick house at the foot of the hill. It was dark and cool inside, with hams and strings of herbs hanging from the beams, and a fire always burning in the great hearth. It was the Burgomaster's job to answer for the behaviour of the villagers, and to supply the officers at the hotel with whatever meat, butter, eggs and other farm produce they might need, and labour to work in the kitchen. It was no easy task, for the demands were heavy, and yet the old man was unfailingly pleasant and always produced the food he was asked for; and, as we learned from the meals we ate from that moment on, it was obviously the best he could find. Like most other peasant-farmers, he hated the "slave" labourers and their lawless activities with a fierce hatred, but the organised might of the occupying army he accepted without protest and with such good grace, that he was a favourite of officers and men alike. The men called him "Dad".

The cottage we chose as the one in which we should ask for rooms lay at the foot of the hill, beside the lake. The old peasant woman who answered our knock was reluctant at first; there was no room, she said, the house was full of children; and then her daughter came up behind her and said: "Don't be a fool, Mother. Can't you see these will be all right," and smiled at us and gestured for us to come in.

There was a youngish woman, smartly dressed in a trim tweedy suit, sitting on the old-fashioned sofa. Her face lit up at the sight of us.

"*Vous parlez Français?*" she asked. "Oh, thank goodness! Now I shall have someone to talk to—better than these two old peasants. Come in and tell me who you are."

"Don't you know that it's forbidden for British soldiers to talk to Germans?" I asked.

She laughed at that. "Oh that," she said. "Is that really serious? It just means, I think, that you cannot sleep with me." She giggled. "You will not want to do that, in any case. You have your wife, and then look at me. *Monsieur et Madame*, please talk to me. I am dying to hear what is going on in the world. I am a doctor, and it is so long . . ."

She had been sent by the German Government to look after the evacuees from the Ruhr, and she had brought her own baby with her, a great fat baby thriving on the cream and eggs and good food from Oeylerberg's farms. Her husband, also a doctor, had been killed in the fighting in Normandy.

"So you see," she said, "I have nothing to want this war to go on for, even if I believed in war—and no doctor could, *n'est ce pas?* We know how easy it is to die without going out and doing it deliberately. You will not find this village against you in your hope of winning the War. They are like me. They hope it is over quickly, so that their men can come back, and they can get back to work again."

She talked on, in a great gabble of ungrammatical French, for the next half-hour, helping Gwenda to unpack and fingering her clothes, and asking questions about England. She was one of those good-humoured but inexhaustible women who just cannot stop talking. We let her stay, because we had no secrets to hide from her, and because she interested us; but we were glad when it was feeding-time for her baby and she had to go off to see to him.

The old peasant woman and her daughter had thought about it and were now obviously overjoyed to see us. They took us on a tour of the house, to see if there were other rooms we fancied rather than those we had been given, and then into the back to see the lavatory, which one shared with the pig, which grunted around you while you sat, but from which there was, as compensation, a magnificent view across the blue trout lake to the lush, wooded valley of the Weser beyond. "Such squalor," said the woman-doctor, appearing round the corner, baby at her breast. "These country cottages are the same the world over. Unhygienic. Oh, for a flush toilet again."

It was fantastic enough to drive from the quiet peace of Oeylerberg to a war that was still going on, only half-an-hour away; to have your breakfast on a verandah beneath which the trout were jumping and smell the smoke of the wood fires drifting over the green hills, and be able to hear, from the other side of the valley, the bang of the guns and the rattle of the machine-guns that were still killing and wounding men in those last days of war. But one day, as the conflict dribbled on, it became even more fantastic; and the worst horror any of us had ever seen came within easy driving distance of our temporary home. For several days negotiations had been going on between the British Army authorities and the Wehrmacht commander facing us on the Bremen-Hamburg front about a concentration camp for German and other political prisoners which was now dangerously close to the zone of combat. The Wehrmacht commander, in a note sent across the lines, revealed that three hundred of his men had only just taken over the camp from a similar number of S.S. guards, who had now been withdrawn on orders, and that they had found a serious state of affairs: 60,000 men and women and children, many of them dying, all of them suffering either from starva-

tion or from typhus, typhoid, scarlet fever and other communicable diseases. They were urgently in need of medical attention and of food, neither of which, the commander pointed out, he was in a position to give in sufficient quantities. He indicated that should the site of the concentration camp become a zone of operations many helpless human beings would inevitably be killed or wounded, and in addition prisoners might escape from the concentration area and thus spread typhus and other plagues across the country, to the danger of civilian and military populations alike. He ended by suggesting that the British authorities, therefore, should take over the concentration-camp area and bring in the necessary food and medical staffs to cope with the situation.

The British commanders had been fighting for a river crossing not far from the location of the camp, and were about to succeed in gaining it. By acceding to the German request they would have to cease military operations in the area. They therefore replied that, in view of military operations, they would only assume control of the concentration camp in return for certain concessions by the Germans, the principal one being the granting of an unopposed crossing of the river for which they were fighting, at another point.

There was some delay while these negotiations went on. We heard from day to day of new messages, new bargainings; and while it was going on, more and more rumours about the concentration camp kept coming through. The Wehrmacht troops, we heard, had been horrified by what they had found; the condition of the camp was beyond description, and their indignation was such that the Germans had turned upon the S.S. guards who had remained behind, and beaten them. These S.S. guards, both men and women, had stayed when the main body of their companions left, on the understanding that they would be evacuated safely

before the entry of the Allies; but the indignation of the German Army was such that they refused to negotiate on their behalf. An agreement was eventually reached. The British Army was given an unopposed crossing of the river outside the camp area, and in return it agreed to take over the camp, bring food and medical supplies, and to evacuate, under the protection of the Red Cross, the Wehrmacht troops and some Hungarian levies who would await their arrival. The S.S. guards were not included in the agreement, but they did not know that until we arrived.

That was how the British Army reached Belsen Concentration Camp.

There have been enough descriptions of the frightful scenes that met the eyes of our troops when they rode into the Belsen camp; there have been exhibitions of the "pictures that cannot be printed in a newspaper", in which the poor, starved and diseased bodies of Belsen's victims were shown to the British and American public; and I have no space here to repeat them. Those first few days at Belsen seem unbelievable now: the stench of death that hung around the camp—not as strong as the death smells in Abyssinia and in Italy, because there was less flesh on these bodies to rot—but enough, I remember, to make J. L. Hodson keep his handkerchief soaked with eau-de-Cologne and to say afterwards: "I'll never be able to bear the smell of eau-de-Cologne again. It will always mean Belsen." The long stretches of grass covered with bodies, among which the S.S. guards were moving, gathering the frail lengths of skin and bone over their shoulders, three and four at a time, to take to the death pit. The death pit itself, eight or ten feet deep in bodies, and someone pointing and saying: "Look, there's one of them still moving", to which the doctor replied: "It's all right. They're as good as dead. They don't feel anything." That same death pit once when, in a fit of rage, one of the British guards flung the Belsen

doctor in and he waded round and round, mad hysteria upon his face, thigh-deep in bodies and sinking as if in quicksand. Nightmare scenes.

The British soldiers who took over Belsen had no time to inquire into the background of the S.S. men and women who had remained behind. They had no time to inquire how Belsen itself had come about. They looked around, and what they saw made them mad with rage. They beat the S.S. guards and set them to collecting the bodies of the dead, keeping them always at the double; back and forth they went all day long, always running, men and women alike, from the death pile to the death pit, with the stringy remains of their victims over their shoulders. When one of them dropped to the ground with exhaustion, he was beaten with a rifle-butt. When another stopped for a break, she was kicked until she ran again, or prodded with a bayonet, to the accompaniment of lewd shouts and laughs. When one tried to escape, or disobeyed an order, he was shot. Under the circumstances, it was impossible to have any sympathy for these guards. The cruelties they had practised, or the neglect they had condoned, were appalling. The punishment they got was in the best Nazi tradition, and few of them survived it;* but it made one pensive to see British

* It has since been announced from Twenty-first Army Group Headquarters that all the male S.S. guards from Belsen have now died "from typhus", contracted while burying bodies of the diseased victims of the camp. The women S.S. guards are still alive, all having apparently survived. So is Josef Kramer, the camp chief, who was reported in the Canadian newspaper *Maple Leaf* in early July to have arrived in Brussels. "After getting out of a plane which brought him from Germany," said the paper, "he was put in a truck and taken across the airfield. He was slow in getting out of the truck. So a military policeman grabbed him by the back of the neck and threw him out, and he landed on his face in the dirt, whimpering like a child. He presented a sorry sight. He had a two-day beard. His ankles were not chained, but his hands were handcuffed behind his back. When the plane was ready to continue its flight Kramer was pushed into it. He had difficulty in climbing up the narrow ladder into the plane without using his hands, so a policeman kicked him and he sprawled into it."

soldiers beating and kicking men and women, even under such provocation. These S.S. guards were a brutalised and inhuman lot, and yet when you talked to their victims it seemed that they were, in many cases, by far the best of the lot; the worst had decamped while they still had time, and would probably never be caught.

After a few days, observers and investigators moved into Belsen and some of the facts about it began to emerge. The victims were questioned, and it became apparent that the camp had been a collecting point for sick men and women from other concentration camps in other parts of Germany. Its camp staff had been brutal enough, but not nearly so cruel as at other camps in Germany; and, until the Russian push, it had coped well enough with its dead and dying. Then trainload after trainload of diseased German and Allied prisoners began to pour into the camp. Thousands began to die every day; there was not enough food to feed them; and the crematoria could not handle the enormous number of bodies. It was then, with no isolation wards possible, with dead lying all over the camp awaiting burial, that the situation got so completely out of hand that Kramer and his staff no longer tried to handle it. The main body of the S.S. guards went away, before the British could apprehend them, leaving only a skeleton staff behind. The Wehrmacht and Hungarian levies took over.

As we listened to the stories of Belsen, as the survivors told them, particularly the stories of the women victims, we studied the S.S. women guards and wondered how they could have been willing to take on such a brutish job. Gwenda discovered that the best-looking of them all, a girl named Annalese Kohlman, had left the camp with the bulk of the S.S., but found that she could not bear to be away from another woman guard with whom she was in love; so she dressed up in civilian clothes and smuggled herself into the camp, pretending to be a victim. The inmates

allowed her to stay, unmolested, until the arrival of the British, when they gave away her secret. Annalese, a dark-eyed, black-haired girl in her early twenties, was half-German, half-French, and her job at the camp was her first. Elisabeth, the head guard, had been a hairdresser before, and others were former secretaries and typists. It was hard, when you talked to them, to associate them and their bourgeois backgrounds with the bestialities of Belsen. If ever there were proof that, given the sort of regime which thrives upon it, any man or woman can be brutalised and degraded into committing the worst kind of cruelties, Belsen was it. Many of my colleagues came away from Belsen raging against the Germans, and saying that they should all be wiped out for what had happened at Belsen; forgetting how many of Belsen's victims had been Germans themselves. We came away realising, with renewed horror, how thin was the margin that separated even the most ordinary men and women from bestialism. All it needed was the political regime, the encouragement of a malignant political belief, to destroy that margin. The Frenchmen who had tortured their fellow-countrymen at Fresnes during the Occupation, the Belgian torturers of Breendonck, the Dutch Nazis in The Hague; like the guards at Belsen, they had once been hairdressers and secretaries and clerks and typists, too. Belsen, far from making us rage against all Germans, only made us realise once again that brutality knows no frontiers, nor nationality. You do not need to be German to beat and kick and torture. All you need is the regime that encourages the instinct; or, if it is wartime, the excuse of high-minded indignation.

While the British occupiers of Oylerberg village were streaming back from Belsen and fuming against the filthy German race, something happened on their doorsteps that might have given them thought, if they had been in a mood

for thinking. I have said that Oeylerberg's hotel had been, before we came, officially requisitioned by the German Government for the use of bombed-out evacuees from the Ruhr. When we took the hotel from them, these evacuees went to stay in the village; the woman doctor and her baby, in the house where we were staying, were two of them; every other house had two or three, together with their children. Perhaps because his farmhouse was one of the biggest buildings in the village, the Burgomaster had several evacuees. There was an old woman, her daughter, several babies and children, and two attractive young girls in their teens.

We were called down to the Burgomaster's house one evening by Giles, the cartoonist, who was also staying there. (Giles, like ourselves, liked to get away from army control and discover Germany for himself.) He asked us if we would come and translate the story of one of the young girl evacuees, and find out exactly what terrible things had happened to her and her friend.

The Burgomaster's house was full of weeping women; the only one who was not weeping was a pretty, white-faced young German girl; she seemed too bewildered to do anything, and just stood there while everyone around her talked or sobbed. She had been coming home with her friend, she said, from a visit to the village up the road. They had just passed in front of a wooden defence wall, about a hundred yards away from the first house in Oeyle, when they saw a British army lorry. It was a main road, along which many convoys passed, so neither the girl nor her companion remarked on it; they were not even alarmed, near as they were to the village, when two men in British uniforms jumped out and came towards them, and they just laughed and refused when the men tried by signs to persuade them to come into the woods. Then one of the soldiers grasped hold of the other girl and began to drag her towards the

woods. "She fell on her knees and pleaded with them to let her go. I joined in and pleaded, too, but they just dragged her on her knees along the road. Then suddenly she began to scream, and one of the soldiers got his gun and put it to her throat. I don't know whether he meant to fire or whether he was trying to frighten her, but the gun went off. Her throat and chest were all shot away, and the soldiers let her go and ran for their lorry. I ran too, towards the houses to get help."

That was all. A British corporal ran out of the house at the sound of the scream and the noise of the gun, and saw two British soldiers scrambling into the lorry and driving away. He calmed the hysterical young girl, and then he and his companions helped to move the other girl's body from the road. The military police came around to take depositions, and a search began for the culprits; I don't suppose they were caught, for units were on the move at that time and things difficult to check. In the Burgomaster's house, though there was weeping, there was no resentment at what had occurred; all of them seemed to accept it.

"These things happen in war," the Burgomaster said. "We don't blame the British. A German might have done the same thing. There are good and bad everywhere."

CHAPTER SIX

WE HAD BEEN expecting the collapse for a long time, and yet when it came we were surprised at its swiftness and completeness. Bremen was ours—and we had another ride into a stinking half-ruin, filled with drunken “displaced persons”, sottishly swigging wines and liquors in the gutters. With them this time were the Germans themselves, drinking and looting as greedily as the others, since they could not protect their goods from the raiding bands. And then it was village after village and town after town; down the roads in almost unending streams the prisoners came, so many that no one bothered to guard them now, but just told them to keep on going until they found a cage which would take them in. Every night, against a background of calm and lovely music—for the orchestra from Bremen radio was performing better in those days than ever before—the Nazi announcers still screeched defiance, and a drunken and frightened William Joyce stuttered and gibbered. Then, on May Day evening, came the announcement for which we were waiting: Hitler was dead.

That night we had been giving a May Day party for Piliugin and Kraminov, the two Soviet war correspondents attached to the British Army, and for the released Russian prisoners-of-war who had come to work for us pending the link-up with the Soviet forces. As we ate and drank and made speeches, British, American, Russian and French together, we could hear the radio in the improvised bar next door playing on and on, majestic music of Beethoven and Brahms, with every now and then a break while an announcer warned listeners that important news was coming. When the announcement was made, Colonel Piliugin leapt to his feet and lifted his glass high, shouting passionately in Russian,

and we knew before it was translated that the toast was: "To the death of Hitler!" Then we were all silent and thoughtful for a few moments, looking at each other, savouring the news, thinking back on what it had cost, the death of this man.

No one had any doubts, that night, about the truth of the news. We did not believe that Hitler had died the "hero's death" about which the announcer talked so solemnly; but we knew the news was true, that night. And nothing I have heard since makes me sceptical of it. I do not believe that Adolf Hitler is still alive; the evidence of those who were closest to him in those days confirm that he was a dying man. General Bayerlein told me, weeks before the May Day announcement, that the Fuehrer was a sick, broken man, not expected by his doctors to last more than a month. Himmler, in reply to a question put to him after his capture, maintained that Hitler was a dying man during the Battle for Berlin; and there were many others—servants, guards, doctors, dentists—all of whom confirmed Hitler's death. They may all be in a great conspiracy to conceal and protect the Fuehrer, but I do not believe it. Hitler may have got away—his fellow members of the Party might have engineered it—if he had been a fit man, likely to be useful to the Party in the future; but he was not; he was a dying man. He knew it and the Party knew it. What was the use of escaping, only to die?

The Fuehrer died, instead, in the Reichschancellery cellars; I believe that. Then members of the Party burned the body and did what they could under the circumstances—the Russians were almost upon them—to destroy the remains, and thus create a mystery about the fate of Adolf Hitler that might be useful in the dark days to come. If any opportunities came for making trouble, then mystery about Hitler would be valuable; what did it matter whether he was alive or dead, so long as no one really knew? You could stir up

disturbance, and always gain the help of a few romantic youths, by suggesting that the Fuehrer still lived and was still giving orders.

Berlin was in Russian hands. Munich, Nuremberg, the Austrian frontier crossed from the West. Doenitz had been proclaimed Fuehrer and broadcast his determination to fight on; but we knew how little that meant, for our intelligence officers had a report of Doenitz' visit to Hamburg a few days before, when he had told U-boat chiefs that it was now only a matter of weeks, only a matter of getting the best bargain possible.

We drove North to the Baltic to meet the Russians, and all the way we saw the German Army collapsing, a gigantic machine crumbling away into bewilderment and futility; this machine, which had overwhelmed Europe, was breaking up into its component parts, and now you saw not a great army, but just ragged, blistered, weary "crocodiles" of men trudging down the roads to imprisonment, jeered at by the foreign slaves they had captured in the years of victory.

We got back to find Hamburg given up without a fight, the tanks of the Seventh Armoured Division riding in with a German general leading the way; with two of Montgomery's principal Intelligence officers—Joe Ewatt and Bill Williams—playing amateurish conspirators to such effect that we did not need to be told that there were negotiations in progress. On the afternoon of May 4, we were summoned to the Field-Marshal's Tactical Headquarters on Lüneburg Heath, to see and hear the final act. It was all very well to pretend to be cynical, and to say to oneself that the War was over, anyway, so why be affected by a ceremony that did nothing but confirm it; it was still an emotional occasion. They served us tea from a Y.M.C.A. truck, and refined paste sandwiches, while we waited for Montgomery; and, since

Gwenda was the only woman present, was it for her benefit that the latrine had been dug fifty yards away and a large sign with LADIES painted on it stuck beside the canvas? Montgomery came, and he in turn kept the German delegates waiting, standing miserably about in the rain, first while he told us, and told us superbly, of the events which had led up to the Armistice, and later while he conferred with his *aides* inside the caravan. With their backs towards us, Von Friedeburg and his three companions stood there, on the spot where all of them must, at some time in their careers, have watched German armies manoeuvring on the plain below in the exercises of pre-War days, and where now unending convoys of British troops were moving. Montgomery kept them standing there, letting them watch and think, letting the rain splash over them, until he judged the moment right; and then he sent Ewatt clattering down the steps to round the Nazi generals up and shepherd them to the tiny army tent on the lip of Lüneburg tor, where the Kleig lights were ready, and the microphones, for photographs to be taken and records made of the signing ceremony. Earlier that afternoon, when he had rehearsed it with the B.B.C. commentator and his engineers, Montgomery had explained that when the German delegates sat down at the table inside the tent they would be seeing the terms he was giving them for the first time. "They will have copies in German," he said, "and I will read in English. Then I will say to them: 'Do you accept?' and if, as I hope and trust, they say they do, I will then tell them to come to the head of the table, one by one, and sign."

In actual fact, it was a ceremony slightly modified. Whether Montgomery deliberately omitted it, to emphasise the contempt he had already markedly shown towards these representatives of the General Staff, or whether in the excitement of the moment he forgot it, I do not know, but after he had read the terms he did not ask whether the delegates

accepted. "You will now sign," he said, and, meekly, one by one, they came. The Post Office pen scraped on the paper; the delegates sat down again, expressionless, and waited. There was a moment, while the last photographs were being taken, when Von Friedeburg turned his full face into the lights, an expression of tremendous anguish in his eyes as he posed for the pictures; and then the flap of the tent dropped and it was over.

Yes, it was over; and that being so, the action of Supreme Headquarters in allowing Admiral Doenitz and the Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht to go on operating, practically uncontrolled, and with only observer officers to superintend their actions, was something of a shock. Looking back it seems incredible now that, for nearly three weeks after the unconditional surrender of the German nation, the German High Command was still in full command at Flensburg, still giving out orders, which were still being obeyed by German Army units all over the Reich.

Why Doenitz and his staff were given that incredible privilege is still an official secret. The assertion was made at the time that it was convenient to the Allies; that in the immediate period following the German surrender we needed some sort of German official body, which could issue orders to the millions of German troops still at large; an official body which could guarantee immediate obedience. Many of us still believe that, in fact, the German Army was such a beaten force that it would have obeyed our orders with much more alacrity than those of Doenitz, and that all we needed to do was to take over the communication and liaison system of the Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht, and begin using it. Others, while agreeing that the General Staff was of great use to us in the critical period following surrender (enabling us, as it did, to have all German military leaders within easy reach to whom we could give orders) nevertheless maintained

that we should never have allowed them to continue *independent* operations.

The end of the War in Europe found us confronted by an ironic situation. Though the Allies had known for weeks that the collapse was coming, they had no organisation large enough to deal with the problems which presented themselves when the event came to pass. The only organisation capable of dealing with the internal situation created by the surrender of the German Army, in fact, was the German Army itself. The Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht had come to Flensburg, its last resting place, after a hazardous voyage across Europe from the East. It was surrounded, when the end came, by the bulk of the organised armed forces left in Germany, and those forces far outnumbered Field-Marshal Montgomery's armies facing them. It would certainly not have been impossible to round up the German troops, and disarm them, without the co-operation of Doenitz and his staff; but Montgomery's spokesmen maintained that it would have made the task immeasurably more difficult and long-drawn-out.

That may have been so. No one argues with military necessity. But were the advantages we gained sufficient to offset the fact that, until nearly the end of May, the Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht, which shares guilt for the War equally with the Nazi Party, had complete freedom from control and freedom of movement in a large area of German soil? The situation in Flensburg was a crazy one, and a distasteful one, too. German guards kept British officers from the area; when Doenitz or his subordinates drove abroad, it was in German cars driven by German soldiers and guarded by German arms; and British soldiers were expected to salute high-ranking German officers, until Montgomery heard about it and rescinded the order.

For nearly three weeks the farce went on; a period during which Doenitz undoubtedly co-operated in helping to ratify

the terms of his surrender, but a period during which our refusal, or our inability, to interfere gave him many opportunities for doing other things too which may not have been as beneficial for us. "They are most polite and co-operative," said one officer about the Oberkommando's relations with the SHAEF mission, which was living at that time aboard the liner *Patria* in Flensburg harbour. But it emerged not long afterwards that, in their polite and co-operative way, Doenitz and his gang were trying even at that late date to provoke some sort of split between the Allies. Their approach to both British and American delegates was anti-Russian. "We know you have to pretend to be friends with the Russians, but, all the same, you realise as well as we do that Russia is the real enemy, and getting rid of us would be playing right into the Russian hands." They were often as blatant as that in their approach to the British and the Americans. The remarks of General Bayerlein after his capture had given the impression that some members of the General Staff realised their culpability, alongside that of the Nazi Party, for the events leading up to the War, but Doenitz and his *aides* showed no signs of guilt. They did not even attempt to justify Germany's attitude, but tacitly assumed that the British and Americans accepted the justice of the German cause, and had fought against it only because of "politics".

"This is a period of temporary eclipse, but it is not the end. You will need us again, when the war with Russia comes." Such was the attitude of the Oberkommando in Flensburg; Doenitz, Jodl, Keitel, and all other officers, busily disseminated anti-Russian atrocity propaganda. No one tried to stop them. Our officers had orders not to interfere with them, not to be "rude" and "dictatorial". Doenitz and his staff did not waste their opportunity of ensuring that the German General Staff would continue to operate, even after they themselves had been taken into custody. They held

daily conferences in Flensburg, away from Allied ears, on future plans. I have no doubt that Allied Intelligence organisations will be able to take care of all underground organisations which spring up in Germany in the years to come, but it seems foolish to have provided the Generals with an opportunity of preparing an extra one.

It can surely be no secret that, during the "isolation" period, Doenitz and his staff sheltered two of the principal war criminals wanted by the Allies, and not only did nothing to reveal their presence but warned them when to get away. I am referring to Heinrich Himmler and Joachim von Ribbentrop, both of whom were in Flensburg until shortly before we moved in upon the O.K.W. headquarters and arrested the Staff. William Joyce, the Bremen radio propagandist, was also there, although his movements were possibly not within Doenitz' personal knowledge.

When Doenitz and his staff were arrested they were repeatedly asked for information of Himmler's whereabouts. Beyond saying that he had been in Flensburg, none of them would give it, although they must have known of his plans for escape. The case of Himmler was, in any case, a curious one all round. We too knew, or at least strongly suspected, that Himmler was in Flensburg, and why we took no steps to arrest him is one of those secrets I hope will be cleared up some day. It would be an unsatisfactory explanation, in view of his suicide while being questioned later, if the only reason for our inactivity was our fear that Himmler would kill himself if we tried to descend upon him. Nearly three weeks' respite for the High Command is a high price to pay for a criminal whom we caught only by chance, after all—and then allowed to get away from us again. Next to Hitler, Himmler was the great prize. Doenitz and the German High Command can congratulate themselves upon having cheated the Allies of him, and possibly having cheated us of some of the most vital secrets of the War.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE APPEARANCE OF the Russian delegates aboard the *Patria*, in Flensburg harbour, and the knowledge that the Soviet Government was working side by side with the British and the American in the break-up of the German military machine must have come as a shock to Doenitz, Keitel and Jodl, after their eleventh-hour attempts to spread dissension. The trim, purposeful figures of the Soviet officers cleared away some of the pale pink, Ruritanian clouds that were hanging about. For the Russians made no secret of their impatience with the "German Government at Flensburg", and they agitated for its destruction as urgently as possible.

The Russians, as those of us who have met them in this war have come to know, are realists; they have never disguised it; and as realists they have used members of the German General Staff themselves, notably Field-Marshal von Paulus after his capture at Stalingrad, as part of their campaign to spread uncertainty through the ranks of the German Army. But the Russians have always made it clear, too, that they consider the General Staff, along with Hitler, to be primarily responsible for the War, and have several times expressed their determination that it shall once and for all be destroyed. It was for that reason that they put so many German generals down on their lists of major war criminals, whose extradition to the Soviet Union for trial they will demand, since they do not trust the democracies to deal with them. Russian observers viewed Flensburg with suspicion, and one Soviet correspondent asked me ironically if we were finding it *very* hard to be brutal to these nice German officers, who were so obviously gentlemen who had been to all the right schools and house parties?

In actual fact, the attitude of men like Field-Marshal

Montgomery towards the German General Staff could hardly have been colder and more contemptuous, and statements from both the British and the Americans pledging themselves to destroy the General Staff traditions in Germany, as well as the National Socialist Party, should have allayed suspicion. But the more we talked with the Russians in Germany, the more we sensed the deep distrust they had of us. There was a gulf between them and the Anglo-Americans that all the local goodwill in the world did not seem to dissipate. They invited us to dinner; they drank with us and talked with us; they were brutally frank in their criticisms of our system, and more than willing to listen to criticism in return. But no matter how the argument ran, always we reached the point when Russian scepticism seemed to intervene, and then they would all become very polite and nod their heads and say, vehemently, how completely convinced of our honesty of purpose and intention they were now, in spite of what had gone before; and you knew very well inside you that they were not convinced at all. As Gwenda said, on one of those occasions: "You can hardly blame them, can you?"

You couldn't, but it was nevertheless a chastening feeling, and one profoundly hopes the Labour victory in Britain will change it.

We had made life so uncomfortable and complicated inside our zones in Germany that perhaps the Russians could be forgiven for believing both the Americans and ourselves to be a twisted and inexplicable set of people, whose motives could not only not be trusted but also not understood. Compared with life on our side of the demarcation line through the Central Reich, we found that the policy followed in the Russian zone was gloriously simple. There were no strange taboos here, no schoolmistress rules to be followed.

I suppose no country can claim to have suffered more at

the hands of the Germans than Russia. Her great cities have been destroyed, her people shipped off to slavery in millions, cruelties practised against them more vicious than against any other race, save the Jews. No other race has more right to demand reprisal and revenge. Yet Soviet policy in their Occupied Zone in Germany, judging by what we were allowed to see of it, was built on a far more constructive basis than hate. I have seen dispatches in the British and American Press telling highly coloured stories of how thousands of Germans fled from the Russians because of the looting, the rapes and the murders they committed during their advance across Reich territory. It is true that thousands of Germans fled, and that those who remained behind did so with terror in their hearts. But that was due more, I believe, to Nazi propaganda than to the actual behaviour of the Red soldiers. True, the Red troops did loot and rape and murder as they occupied villages and towns and cities in Germany, but they were by no means unique in that. British and American troops became expert looters themselves (and probably much more methodical, because they had found extremely profitable means of disposal in the Brussels and Paris black markets); and the records of the British and American Armies in Germany will show that raping and murdering is no Soviet monopoly. These things happen in war, are part of the fever of war, and no one nationality is much different from another in its behaviour to the enemy under given conditions.

The Russian certainly took what he wanted from the Germans, but we found that he brought something with him, too. Goebbels and the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda had pictured the Reds as bloodthirsty monsters, bent on destroying the German people; they entered the country knowing that they would be feared. And I think Stalin and his advisers were wise enough to see that nothing would be more effective than showing, right from the start, that Fear was

not necessary, that what the Russians were bringing was something altogether different: Hope. I don't know whether the Russian soldier and the Russian officer was "briefed" beforehand or not; perhaps he was; or perhaps it was just his instinctive creed. But certainly we found that though he might be rough with the Germans often enough, his attitude, from the first, was completely different from that of our troops. The Red soldier saw the Germans not as a nation of culprits to be wiped out, but as a nation of victims; stupid victims, perhaps, but victims nevertheless. He brought with him hate, but it was a hate not so much of Germans but of National Socialist Germans. In the small villages and the large towns we would always find someone among the Russians whose special job it seemed to be to explain his or her (for it was often a woman) Army and his, or her, people to the Germans, to tell frightened citizens why the Russians were there and how they had come and what they hoped to do. They gave away no secrets; they gave very little at all, in fact, except words, and yet what a remarkable effect it all had. When the British or Americans had captured a town the civilian was pushed into his cellar and treated as a potential enemy, to be shot at the first suspicious move; and I don't say we were wrong in that. The Russians were as suspicious, too, taking no chances, shooting down all those of whom they were not completely sure; but they didn't stop there. At the first opportunity, these German-speaking Russians began moving among the people, reassuring them, telling them that the Red Army was an army to be trusted, that its coming meant the start of things rather than the end of them. Propaganda, perhaps; but how much more efficacious than the sullen suspicion with which we took over a city and began to administer it.

From the Russian point of view, there was no question of non-fraternisation with the Germans. They were out to disprove Goebbels' propaganda, and to win the German

people over from fear of them to admiration and liking ; and so they talked, when they could, to the Germans, or shook hands with them, or gave them food ; shared houses with them, and went out with their girls. Non-fraternisation and ruthless punishment, yes, of the Nazis, and all those who had helped the Nazis, and profited from Nazi rule : there was no hesitation about that in the Russian zone in Germany. The arrests were far greater than anything I saw in British or American Occupied Germany. The Russians were making certain. But, towards the others, friendliness and an offer of co-operation. A wary friendliness, and proofs of friendship before co-operation, but both offers were tangible. And they were making a deep impression upon the German people.

With the victims of Nazi concentration camps, especially those victims who had long and honourable political records, the Russians were effuse in their welcome ; and that went, we found, for Socialists and Social Democrats, as well as for Communists, and for musicians and writers and painters whose opposition to the Nazis had been more artistically than politically exerted. To these men the jobs as burgomasters and city officials were given ; they were put in charge of whole areas and told to use their own judgment in recruiting their help. The old trade-union leaders were completely trusted ; and the industrial workers were subtly flattered into believing that they too were completely accepted, although we gathered that the Soviet officials, far too wily to accept friendship at face value, were watching carefully and were ready to move in, with arms, at the slightest suggestion of disturbance. For the rest of the population, with the exception of avid Nazis, who were shot out of hand in the first days of occupation, and sent to Russia in gangs later on, the Soviet political workers seemed to have adopted the attitude that the mass of the Germans were misguided and misled victims of Hitler and his gang rather than fellow-conspirators ; a nation to be helped back to greatness rather than crushed out of existence.

It was remarkable to see, incidentally, how Germany's pride in her composers was used by the Russians to break down suspicion and fear. "How can two nations which have produced great music, which we both love, hate and fear and fight each other?" the Russians said. In almost every town they came to, the Russians would search out the musicians, the singers and players and conductors, and organise concerts to which Russians and Germans would go together, and at which Russian and German composers would share the honours of the programme. It was an effective method of approach, and the response was widespread.

When you talked to the Russian political units, and to the Soviet journalists who travelled with many of them, they would nod their heads in agreement over the Anglo-American attitude to the Germans, and say, yes, they understood it, understood the need for us to go on hating the Germans, even after they were defeated. "That is your system." But for the Russians—well, it would be illogical, they said. Illogical not to fraternise, illogical not to encourage a renewal of political activity (so long as it wasn't Nazi) and the re-establishment of trade unions and schools and theatres. "We have no alternative," they said. "We need friends, everywhere. With peoples we must be friends, even those who have fought against us."

"And if the Germans refuse to be friends?" I asked.

They smiled. "There is no question of refusal. We must be friends with all people, and enemies of all those who oppress them; there is no alternative. All we need to do is to destroy those who, in their own interest, prevent us from being friends."

It was a curious feeling for a Briton to witness those first stages of Russo-German co-operation. It was hard, even remembering the motivations of Russian policy, to believe that the hates of war could be so quickly abandoned. I have

noticed since that Occidental observers have shown a certain amount of scepticism over it, seizing upon any coldness of behaviour between Russian and German—in Berlin, for instance—to prove that the Soviet policy is a sham and a blind. But I don't think it is. I am not so sure that it is spontaneous; much of it is done on orders. All the better perhaps. It is a definitely pursued policy drawn up by men who believe there is more to be gained in Germany from a policy of friendship than from a policy of suppression and resentment. It is a policy, sincere and uncomplicated, of believing that, in spite of what has happened, the German people are like anyone else, with the same qualities of good and bad in them; and of treating them accordingly. Germany was a bad nation, the Russians say, because of National Socialism and the conditions which produce National Socialism. Therefore, remove the Nazis completely and prevent conditions arising which will produce a similar system, and Germany will become a good nation.

But that, say the Russians, can only be achieved by co-operation with the Germans; not by outright punishment.

The ironic thing is, we found as we travelled Germany, that in practical application Russian policy towards the defeated Germans differed little from our own. It was the spirit in which it was applied. The Russians gave the Germans newspapers and concerts and radio programmes; they re-opened the schools for the children and cinemas and theatres for the adults; they invited themselves to German homes and set themselves out to be pleasant. They made it clear from the outset that they were doing these things willingly, because they wanted the Germans to like them.

The Anglo-Americans, on the other hand, had by the end of June come round to the point where they were providing almost the same things for the Germans: newspapers, concerts, radio programmes; schools slowly re-opening; a few cinemas and even some reluctant opera. ("Though not

Wagner," said one Military Governor. "He's just a Nazi.") They had even reached the point when the non-fraternisation ban was being lifted, and you could visit a German home or take out a German girl without facing court-martial. But, where the Russians had won goodwill by the promptness in which they had given these things, and the spirit with which they had given them, the Anglo-Americans gave them grudgingly, as if to say: "This is just to keep you quiet, so you won't riot this winter when things are bad." The tangible results were the same, but the intangibles (which mean so much to a German, so sensitive in his pride) were very different, importantly different. We made it very clear to the Germans, no matter what we did, that we were still morally indignant with them for their behaviour in the War, and that they would have to pay for it. As to the future, well that would have to wait, we said; first let the Germans, by docility, prove themselves, and then perhaps the future could be thought out. In contrast, the Russians demanded reparation—had begun taking it, in fact—but offered political and social rehabilitation at the same time. And what a profound difference to the Germans, desperately looking for hope, that made.

The two most stupid laws which Supreme Headquarters imposed when they began occupying Germany were undoubtedly the ban on fraternising and the prohibition on political activity. They were drawn up in the days when a long and fierce struggle on German soil was envisaged, during which fraternisation might have given away information, and political activity, no matter how anti-Fascist, might have been a cloak for underground, pro-Nazi activity. At least, that was what SHAEF officials said. (It is also probably true that the two laws were introduced in the mistaken belief that they would please the Russians. The Anglo-American political leaders all believed that Russian hatred of Germany would be such that they would impose slave

conditions upon the Germans, and probably decided that they had better keep in line.) When it became obvious that the struggle was not going to be a long one, and that, in any case, the German population was friendly and even co-operative, the two laws should have been dropped, but those who drew them up refused to admit they had made mistakes.

The Americans favoured abandoning non-fraternisation, at least. The commanders on the spot knew that few Americans were obeying the non-fraternisation order, and that few unit officers were troubling to enforce it. The British were more reluctant. "We have to think of the people at home," they said. "They won't like it." It was one of those occasions when, in my opinion, the common-sense of the British was grossly under-rated. But there it was. They decided eventually that it was not fraternising to speak to a German child, but drew the line at saying even a "good morning" to a German adult. It might give the Germans the idea that we were "softening" towards them, a spokesman said, and part of the British soldier's job in Germany was "to teach the German that he can't start a war like the last one and just get away with it". How the British soldier was going to teach the Germans anything, when he was forbidden to mix with them at all, was a mystery. The non-fraternisation order inevitably created a sex problem. What the average soldier would have liked was an opportunity to visit a family, as he had done in Belgium and France, to get away from military discipline for a time and find some sort of home atmosphere. Under those circumstances the propaganda he might have done, in the receptive first few weeks after VE Day, was tremendous; but the ban, and the way in which the controversy over it raged in Germany and at home, inevitably made it seem solely a question of sex. It was no longer a question of whether a British soldier could visit a German family, or talk to a German adult, but whether he could go out with a German girl and, though this was only

suggested, sleep with her. It was discussed and considered on that basis only, until, in early July, when the removal of the ban on fraternising was first hinted, the suggestion was made that it should apply only to German girls, and not to other adults! The authorities were alarmed because, in June, they had been getting eighty courts martial a week for rape, by British soldiers against German girls, in the Second Army area alone; and venereal disease was rising. The Judge Advocate General's department was complaining of overwork. Unit commanders were beginning to issue contraceptives to their troops. Upon that basis, the removal of the order on non-fraternising was, it would seem, chiefly discussed by the Army commanders. We were still adopting the "shocked horror" attitude towards the Germans, and still making concessions grudgingly.

Germany, with the end of the War, was riper for democratic political activity than ever before in her existence. Long years of frustration and repression under the Nazis had whipped the fervour of the politically-minded to a heat; the complete collapse of National Socialism had made the ordinary people receptive to democratic ideas, eager to sponsor a juster, more sincere and more durable form of government. All over the country there were men and women waiting for the opportunity to engage in good government again; the older people who remembered the Socialists and Communists and Social Democrats, who had been good trade-unionists in the past, and now wanted to try again; the younger people, suddenly bereft of a political philosophy they had been told could never fail, and now desperately anxious for some sort of belief to which they could cling, some sort of cause they could espouse.

The Russians had been quick to exploit the political-mindedness of the people. They were encouraged from the outset to organise. In all the cities and towns and villages Socialists, Social Democrats, Communists and Christian

Democrats (these the most right-wing of the parties) began forming; meetings were held, time was given to them on the radio. A trade-union congress was restarted in Berlin, and announced its programme almost at the same time that a trade-union congress in Hamburg was disbanded by the British. A youth movement, to take the place of the Hitler Youth and its feminine counterpart, the B.D.M., was announced and volunteers called for to instil into the youth of Germany once more "a love of freedom, democracy, health and justice". All over the Russian zone the people were interested in politics and in government again.

So they were too in the British and the American zones, but here repressive measures were still in force. The Military Governments in both these zones still suspected all form of political activity, even though it be led by men who had served in concentration camps for their anti-Nazi beliefs; suspected it because they were soldiers, ignorant politically, suspicious of "politicians"; and they believed any political activity might be used as a cloak for reviving the Nazis again, they said. More and more, in the British zone, we found this narrow, military mind in control, politically inexperienced, unmindful and even contemptuous of the yearnings of the people. "It might cause trouble, forbid it," was their reaction to every new development. So the most open and innocent campaigning was banned; left-wing democrats, who had worked and suffered for years to defeat Nazism, found to their bewilderment that they were allowed to offer the people nothing to take its place. The most wonderful opportunity that we have ever had of winning over the German people to democracy was being lost. They wanted something to fill the vacuum that had been created by the defeat of Hitler and his regime; we offered them nothing. Our attitude was one of pious indignation for the injuries they had done us. And you saw as you drove through Germany that indignation and shocked horror was

not enough. As they listened to the Berlin radio, with its descriptions of life in the Russian zone, resentment was already beginning to grow among the people as they compared it with the unimaginative military control of their own lives. We obviously couldn't go on treating them as moral lepers, with nothing to hope for, without something happening. And as we drove southwards into the American zone we discovered, when we stopped in Cologne, that something was already beginning to happen. The Nazis who had gone underground were regaining hope; they were forming blocs again through the Rhineland, holding secret meetings, giving instructions. The people wanted something to turn to, some sort of belief to which they could cling. When winter came, and the inevitable hunger, the bewilderment they felt at the attitude of the British towards them might well turn to bitterness; and amid bitterness and frustration the Nazis knew they could build again, as they built in the years before 1933.

Nor, as we went further South, did we find that fear of a Nazi return confined to the Rhineland. It was present in Bavaria, too, and in Franconia.

When we set out on the drive to Franconia, towards the end of May, I confess that the journey for me was one full of fear and doubt and anxiety. For what I would find at the end of my journey might well prove me wrong in my belief, which had never wavered all through the years of war, that the German people are just like any others, and can be brought into the community of civilised nations along with the others, if only they are given the right teaching and the right opportunity. There were occasions during the War when I felt like hating the Germans; but whenever the news was particularly bad—when, for instance, the Hitler Government conducted its war with even more than usual brutality—I used to stop myself from condemning the whole of the

German race along with the Nazi leaders by thinking of the Familie Schmidt.

The Schmidts were a family I used to know in Nuremberg, and I have a warm spot in my heart for them: for old, tired, but always beaming Herr Schmidt; for his gentle wife; for Gaby, their blonde daughter; and even—the poor, tragic fool—for Hans, their son. It was not a happy family when I first knew it, and Hitler was the cause. Herr Schmidt was an anti-Nazi; a Social Democrat and a good Roman Catholic, and a hater of Adolf Hitler and all he stood for. He had not been put in gaol for it—his wife's brother was a local Gruppenführer under Streicher—but he had lost his business, and from being a prosperous builder in 1932 he had become by 1939 a poverty-stricken plumber in a Nuremberg suburb. Not that Herr Schmidt and his wife would have minded that, if it hadn't been for Hans. Hans was eighteen, a little bird of a boy with quick, shifty eyes that were always watching you furtively. He was a bookbinder by trade, and a master of it; the Bibles and Shakespeares he showed us were beautiful work. But Hans, though proud of his work, had been bitten by the Nazi bug and itched for more virile and spectacular labour. He did not belong to the Party, for his father sternly forbade it, but he hankered after a uniform, and you could tell from his face that he would like to be out there when the Hitler Youth marched by. And when his father spoke with contempt of Hitler, his face would pucker with fury and he would rise to his feet and scream: "Stop it! He's better than you. He has saved Germany. You cannot even save your own family. You are a sot. A sot and a failure."

There were many quarrels while I was staying with them, with Hans screaming, Frau Schmidt trying to make peace, and young Gaby, anti-Nazi like her father, screaming back. It was an unhappy household; and often the temptation to join the Party must have been great, terrible for Herr

Schmidt to wrestle with. His wife's brother could fix it easily, he knew; all he had to do was join, and there would be work for him, poverty would be over, quarrels over, and his family would be happy again. as it was before Hitler came.

But, though life was becoming daily more grim, he never did. Not even in 1938, when the Sudetenland was taken and war seemed near; not in 1939, when crisis after crisis came, and his friends beseeched him to join before war came, for his family's sake.

"Never," he said. "Not if my family starves and I lose my son. Hitler and the National Socialists stand for injustice, for the wrongful use of might, for persecution of religion and of the weak. I am a simple man, and I suppose what I decide, one way or another, cannot make much difference. But I will not join the Party. I will not condone the things that Hitler does."

He said that, I remember, in the summer of 1939, when I saw him for the last time, and I came away convinced that he meant it; and when I wrote of him in a book published after the outbreak of war, I said then: "There are thousands of Schmidts in Germany, and if only they had more power, if only they had not been beaten down by Nazi thugs, this war would never have happened."

Now I was going to see what had happened to him, and to his family. In five years of war, with a despotism grinding the people harder every year, had he still remained as he was? Was he still an anti-Nazi, or had the Government forced him to give way at last? All the way South I was nervous, racked with anxiety, as I thought about it; and every mile further on I went, the more I thought I was a fool for coming, a sentimental fool. Of course old Schmidt has changed, I thought. How could he go on resisting, with a war on? It wasn't as if he was a young man, or a strong Party man; he had nothing to support him, except his

religion and his decency; and could that have been sufficient in the face of Nazi pressure?

So when I got to Nuremberg and I found that the street in which they had lived no longer existed, I was glad, and got back into the car to drive away. Then someone hailed me. There had been an old woman picking about in the bomb ruins as we drove up, and while we made inquiries she had straightened up and watched us, furtively listening to our words. Now she came suddenly forward, crying: "*Herr Mosley! Gott, du bist—Sie sind Herr Mosley!*"

It was Frau Schmidt. A very old, thin, and ragged Frau Schmidt, but the wife of my old friend; and, unmindful of military law, we squeezed her into the van and drove her around the corner, to the cellar where she was living; and we took tea and bully beef down with us and cooked a meal, while she sobbed in the corner. For a long time she babbled on, half-hysterically, until we pressed tea upon her, and then she said: "This is a happy moment. Since Gaby went away, and my husband died, it has been very lonely."

"He is dead, then?"

Yes, Herr Schmidt was dead; and Hans was dead, too; and Gaby had gone away, to work in Vienna; and she had been very lonely. She began to sob again and it was a long time before we could quiet her. And then gradually we got the story, and as I heard it, I felt guilty for all the doubts I had allowed to trouble me along the road to Nuremberg. For Herr Schmidt had vindicated my belief in him. He had not succumbed to Nazi pressure. All through the War he had resisted them, though his friends had tried hard to make him join the Party and his enemies had intrigued against him; his jobs had dwindled, his rations had been cut down; all the pettinesses that the Party officials could invent had been visited upon him. Things had got so bad that Gaby went away, to become a nurse in a hospital in Munich, whence she had been transferred to the front and then to Vienna. Hans

had been called up into the Army, which was as well, because he hated his father more vehemently than ever, and there were bitter rows whenever he came home on leave. It was a poor and miserable household, and yet one sustained by Herr Schmidt's unswerving belief in right, and by Frau Schmidt's loyalty.

And then, in 1943, it happened. Hans had been killed in an action on the Russian front, and his unit commander had recommended him for gallantry. The Party officials came around one day to tell Herr Schmidt that his son had won the Iron Cross, and that he was to go to Berlin to receive it from the Fuehrer. Passage had been reserved for him and Frau Schmidt in tomorrow's train, they said, and all their expenses in Berlin would be paid. It was a great honour.

"I will not go," Herr Schmidt said.

"But it is the Fuehrer," they said. "It is the Fuehrer who will give you the Cross. You cannot refuse to go to see the Fuehrer."

"That evil man!" Herr Schmidt said. "I have always hated him. I have always refused to join his Party. I refuse to go near the man who has caused this war and killed my son. I refuse to go, do you hear? We do not want his decoration. He is an evil man."

They argued with him, and then they went away. They didn't do anything about it at the time. The decoration was delivered by post. But from that time not even their relatives came near the Schmidts, and they were under constant observation from the police. Complaints were always being made against them, for their failure to be on time for air-raid duty, or for breaches of the black-out regulations. Until finally, towards the end of 1943, the Gestapo came to the door of their house and burst in and, throwing Frau Schmidt to one side, took Herr Schmidt away. He appeared before the court next day on charges of having neglected his duties as a German citizen. The charge was so nebulous that no

answer was possible. Herr Schmidt was sentenced to a year in gaol.

And in gaol he died. Not heroically fighting against National Socialism, but in his cell one night of heart failure. So quietly that the guards didn't even notice it. He left no message behind that is worth quoting. All his last letter to Frau Schmidt said was: "I am very cheerful and still of the same mind. Send my love to Gaby, and tell her not to worry."

Yet Herr Schmidt goes into my list of heroes, for to my mind he is as much a martyr in the fight against Nazism as any of them. He fought them not for Socialism, or for Communism, or for any other party, but for decency; because he was a decent man who abhorred the Nazi creed, because he opposed injustice and war. And yet, I thought, as Frau Schmidt told the story, under Military Government law, had he still been alive in the summer of 1945, I would have been committing an offence by talking to him; and he would have been flung in gaol once more, by us this time, if he had tried to organise his fellow-Germans into working for the ideals in which he believed. If anything made the Military Government laws of the Anglo-American zones in Germany seem stupid, criminally stupid, then that did. Non-fraternisation meant not that I couldn't go out with a girl, but that I couldn't talk to the men who had fought Hitler. The ban on politics meant that they could not, after years of opposition, come into the open even yet. As we left Frau Schmidt and began our drive back, on the first stage of the journey home, the problem of Germany suddenly seemed to me to be the test for the future. What we do in Germany, I thought, will prove once and for all whether there is hope for European civilisation or not. And what we are doing at the moment is wrong.

What is going to happen to Germany in the hands of the

Allied Powers is still a problem. Certain it is that the division of the Reich into four different zones, with four different policies imposed upon her, will go eventually, along with such stupidities as non-fraternisation. But what I hope will go too is the resentment and the indignation which so many British and Americans still cherish against the German people.

It is true that their guilt is heavy, that brutal and bestial things have been done in the name of the German people in the five years of war in Europe. But is the whole nation to go on being punished for that? The National Socialist Party never once won a majority in Germany during the days of free voting. It was a Government imposed by force; a minority Government which did not hesitate to use tortures against its own people to preserve power. Even during the years of Hitler, there were millions of Germans still who loathed his regime and fought against it; thousands of them died in Buchenwald and Belsen and Dachau. There are millions less active, in Germany, who await a lead. There is a revulsion of feeling against the Nazis among them today that offers us the greatest opportunity we have ever had for bringing permanent peace to Europe. Germany is the heart of Europe, and until Germany is settled there will be no peace for the Continent. Deprive her of her military power, by all means, and see that she is never able to make war again. But it is no use, if we are to avoid another conflict, just occupying Germany and doing nothing more constructive than that. Germany will pay heavily enough, in reparations and in hunger, for having started the War; she does not need to have more humiliations and degradations poured upon her. She needs help, and she needs friendship. She needs economic recovery, and she needs the close association and sympathy of the rest of Europe if she is to become a normal nation; and if Europe is at long last to cease being an armed camp. She needs, not

military governors with no influence save of arms, but men of goodwill who can help the German people to find themselves again.

Everywhere I travelled in Germany, this spring and summer, I found Germans—good Germans, sincere Germans—eager and ready not only to make amends, but to work their passage back to civilisation. They know it will be hard, but they are ready for it. Are we to give them the chance? Are we going to emulate the Russians, and say to the Germans: “You are the victims. You have been misguided and misled. We will help you to create a just and civilised government”? Or is ours to continue to be a policy of suspicion and repression?

To those who approve of repression, I would say this: there was one of two things to do when we won this war against Germany. We had to decide either that the Germans could never be re-educated, or we had to decide that they could be brought back into the community of nations. We had to decide either to kill them or cure them. I believe, as one with faith in the essential decency of all human beings, that we made the right decision at Yalta when we decided we would cure the Germans. A nation which produced Goethe and Schiller and Heine, Beethoven and Schumann and Mendelssohn, yes, and Wagner too, whose people love music so much that their orchestras are still the best in Europe, cannot be a lost nation. It can be restored.

Germany has been defeated, but she has not gone out of our lives. For my generation, and for the one that follows after, she will continue to play a part in our destinies. No occupation by the Allied armies, no artificial divisions of her land and people, can prevent that. Along the roads in Russian-occupied Germany is a sign which says in small letters: “It would be ludicrous to identify Hitler’s clique with the German people and the German State.” And then in large letters: “History shows that Hitlers come and go, but

the German people and the German State remain." History has shown, too, that Allied armies of occupation come and go, but the German people and the German State remain. It is no use refusing to fraternise with them. They are a part of Europe and a part of our lives. You can hate them for what has been done in their name, but you cannot get rid of them. By the wrong kind of treatment you can start all the trouble again, create new Hitlers and new Nazi Parties and new wars; but a firm, resolute and unified desire to help her on the part of all those who have a stake in Europe today—Britain, France, Russia, America and the smaller Powers—can make her a factor for peace in the future, a civilised member of the European family instead of its problem and its fear.

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